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A PROPOSAL FOR AN EDUCATIONAL PROCESS WITH PERSONAL  
MEANING AS THE GOAL

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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
the Faculty of the School of Theology  
Claremont, California

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Religion

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by  
A. Edward Turner  
June 1967

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*This dissertation, written by*

A. Edward Turner

*under the direction of ~~the~~ Faculty Committee,  
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to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of  
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## PREFACE

What is presented here is a blueprint. It may be an adequate model for education or it may need modification. The form suggests variability and flexibility within a structure and process designed to be consistent. It is the design that is important and not the product.

It is not the intention of this paper to call for discarding any present theories of either Christian education or secular education. The writer's bias is just another way of hoping to have something to contribute to education in general.

I feel the need to acknowledge the contribution to my thinking of Professor Ross Snyder whose idea of "meanings" inspired this dissertation, and whose writings have made a significant contribution to my educational understandings. I wish also to acknowledge the contribution to my education of my association with the professors and colleagues at Claremont. The constant experience of confrontation, understanding, and personalization of their ideas and concepts has been my seminary education.

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## CHAPTER I

### THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITION OF TERMS USED

The problem discussed in this thesis arises out of the question as to the nature of good education. Institutions concerned with education desire to effect growth. But the problem, in our time, is to decide toward what end we will educate. Growth toward what?

Students of educational process are aware that the goals of education are not at all clear. Is the end goal of education the acquisition of knowledge? Is the goal the ability to share knowledge with others? Is the goal to be able to cope with one's environment; or to gain one's identity; or to create new knowledge. Perhaps it is to combine some of these goals?

This dissertation has taken the risk of selecting a goal for education. It is recognized that it is not the only goal but simply the one that now seems closest to what is needed. Implied within this goal are lesser purposes for teaching and learning. The goal of the educational process is, that the student understand, in a deep sense, his educational experiences and that he express the "meaning" of these experiences in terms of his self-defined life plan.

## I. THE PROBLEM

### Statement of the Problem

It is the purpose of this dissertation to set forth the process of education that has the above goal as its end. The process described is one in which the student is 1) contacted for learning, 2) encouraged to deeply understand the educational act or experience, and 3) helped to say in some way what the act or experience "means" to him personally.

The problem is to describe these three phases of the educational process and to show how they elicit meaning from the student. It is further important to show why personal meaning is important to the student.

### Importance of the Study

Education is conducted by many institutions, including the church. Among the programs offered there are a variety of aims and purposes. There seems to be a need for a theory of education that has as its aim, education that is life-centered and which searches for the individual meaning in every educational experience. Such a purpose would be valid for any education program and still allow for individual and institutional differences. Education for meanings implies an educational process and a theory of instruction that offers the possibility of meanings.



## II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Meaning. Meanings as herein used are defined as the self-understandings, the ideas, the constructs which are elicited by experiencing life and which offer the promise of humanizing the individual, other persons, and social institutions and structures. And the way meanings come about in our lives is through a process of learning--through educational experiences.

A meaning is that which we value and which has had an effect on our perceptions. When we are able to communicate with another, usually symbolically, it tells the other what we personally gained, or lost, out of the educational experience. Something has meaning when it humanizes, actualizes, or returns dignity to the personhood or the cause for which one stands. Something also has meaning when it does quite the opposite--when it de-humanizes, or robs the individual, group, or social institution of dignity. When the person can express that positive or negative feeling about something experienced, it indicates that the experience has been internalized, personalized, and has given rise to meaning. It is our meanings that tell us who we are as a person. Our meanings tell us, and others, why we exist and for what. A meaning is the expression of what we feel about our response to a stimulus of any kind.

Educational experience. The educational experience, as used here, refers to that experience of learning in which the learner gains an increased understanding of himself and his world. It is an intimate experience in that it is personal and results from careful study and investigation. The kind of educational experience implied here suggests something more than the mere sharing of information, although that is involved.

### III. ORGANIZATION OF THE REMAINDER OF THE THESIS

#### Education for Meanings

In this section the discussion centers on the question of the importance of meaning. "Why is it important that each person know how he reacts to his experiences?" This is a basic question and has to do with learning.

The chapter also deals with the idea that all education is religious in the sense that it deals with life, involves duty, and requires a sense of reverence.

The chapter further discusses the belief that man is to be the focus of educational activity and not facts or information.

Finally, the chapter briefly exposes the reader to the process of education by which the student gains the satisfaction of knowing what the educational experience means to him. The three phases of the process are expanded in the chapters that follow.

#### Creating the Point of Contact

In Chapter III the discussion is focused on the first phase of

the educational process--creating a point of contact with the pupil. Contact is the necessary first step in learning. How do we get the pupil's attention? To begin, it is shown that the educational setting is important to contact. There are sociological, psychological, and theological reasons that the "real" setting be the arena for educational experiences where meaning is the goal. Since those reasons have a bearing on the educational process they are discussed.

Because the symbols we use in education have an effect upon whether or not the student is contacted, this chapter discusses the nature, character, and use of symbols. It will be suggested that symbols provide a way of going beyond the usual ways of experiencing. The dialogic character of symbols is discussed as they are used in education.

Finally, various media of communication are available for use in contacting students. The value of media as means by which contact is made is discussed.

Chapter III is designed to show how important it is to the educational process that we give prime attention to the introduction of ideas and concepts in education. It is not something to be passed over lightly. If properly done, the initial contact enhances the educational process and increases the possibility that personal meaning will result.

#### The Search for Understanding

Chapter IV focuses on the second stage of the educational process--the search for understanding. It will be shown that real

understanding, on the part of the student, is the result of two important factors: 1) a theory and practice of communication built on the concept that education is a "social act," and, 2) the skill of the teacher as a vital catalyst to the learning process.

A model of communication is suggested, and its application to the educational process is described. The question of how communications affect education is raised and discussed.

It will be held that "meanings" are not found in physical events, i.e. pictures, words, etc. Rather meanings are found in people who use communication events. The eliciting of meanings, or the process of education, is therefore a symbolic interaction.

The educator's role, as the agent of change by the acquisition of meaning, is also set forth. The educator's relationship to the student and group, his need for knowledge concerning communication and curriculum design, his skill as an instructor and evaluator, are also topics developed.

#### The Personalization of Educational Experience

In Chapter V of the paper the final phase of the educational process receives attention. It will be held that personalization of educational experiences is very often neglected in favor of imparting facts and information, this to the detriment of the student.

The chapter suggests that personalization of the educational act requires an outward expression by the pupil. That expression is to be encouraged which reflects the meaning of the educational experience in terms of the pupil's own goals. Again, symbols are

used in expressing one's feelings and the chapter suggests the value of various symbols, including those created through art.

Finally, this chapter offers an example of education for meaning. The example is an illustration of the creative use of the educational process suggested here, and how it promoted understanding and personal meaning. It will provide the reader with an opportunity to experience the process of education herein suggested through the use of specific subject matter in a specific situation.

## CHAPTER II

### EDUCATION FOR MEANINGS

Each person from an early age has life experiences that contribute to learning in both positive and negative ways; that is in ways that, 1) either contribute to growth as independent persons, or 2) tend to detract from growth by making the individual fearful, anxious, and dependent. As the individual grows into the school years and beyond, an increasing number of learning experiences are planned. However, life experiences are both planned and unplanned.

Is there something to be learned about experience in terms of knowing how to help the individual acquire positive, rather than negative, meaning? But what is the relationship of meaning to experience? Why should meaning be important to learning? What brings meaning out of experience? These are questions that must now be the focus of attention.

#### I. A DISCUSSION OF MEANING

##### What is a meaning?

Something has meaning when it offers a promise of actualizing ourselves, or seriously threatens self-actualization. Something also has meaning when it offers the same promise to others we care for.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ross Snyder, "A Ministry of Meanings," from a mimeographed paper summarizing Professor Snyder's book, prepared by Rene F. Pino, February 3, 1960. The book is now out of print.

Man is continually bombarded with various life situations. The effect of this stream of incidents on the individual is often an unconscious one. Consciously we give little real attention to reflection upon experience in order to determine how it has affected us personally. It is the more general thing for us to let experience come and go, knowing that it has driven us to variety of reactions to it, but never finding the way to discover for ourselves the meanings that come out of experience.

Man is a creature that lives in meanings. Man needs, even hungers, to know what life is all about. When he can't make sense out of the things that are happening to him, he becomes anxious and reticent. When he can't understand, nor see himself doing, what is expected of him, he withdraws and becomes fearful. Erik Erikson has given us a great deal of insight into the struggle with which each person is confronted in this very task of discovering what is expected and what makes sense. As the individual grows and develops and experiences life he has the difficult task of discovering his own unique self-identity. This is a major crisis of the life story, and is a prerequisite to any hope of knowing what real humanness is-- what intimacy is.<sup>2</sup>

Making sense out of life and discovering one's self-identity is to acquire a set of meanings. A set of meanings is not an accumulation of facts or information that come out of seeing the physical

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<sup>2</sup>Erik Erikson, "Growth and Crisis of the Healthy Personality," Psychological Issues, I; 1 (1959), 50-100.

world in which one lives. Rather it is an accumulation of understandings; of "seeing" beneath the surface of an event into its potential for "my living." A set of meanings is the perceptual field that allows life interpretation in an actualizing sense. The meaning one has determines the life style, the ability or lack of ability to cope with life. Viktor Frankl had something like this in mind when he wrote concerning the horror of life in the concentration camp, "The consciousness of one's inner value is anchored in higher more spiritual things, and cannot be shaken by camp life."<sup>3</sup>

#### The Importance of Meanings

Given a set of meanings that contribute to what Fromm calls a "pro-life" rather than an "anti-life" attitude,<sup>4</sup> man can cope with his experience in spite of the adversities of life. To return to Frankl for a moment, given the ghastly set of circumstances in which he and others found themselves in the camps, there was evidence that came to him and gave to him expression of this meaning to his experience, ". . . everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms--to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way."<sup>5</sup>

To choose one's attitude, one's own way is the

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<sup>3</sup>Viktor E. Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning, (New York: Washington Square Press, 1963), p. 99.

<sup>4</sup>Erich Fromm, The Heart of Man, (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), pp. 37ff.

<sup>5</sup>Frankl, op. cit., p. 104.



self-understanding, the meaning that Frankl and some of his fellow prisoners were able to salvage out of one of man's darkest hours. It humanized them at a time when all else was de-humanizing.

That each pupil be helped to acquire his unique and personal meaning from educational experiences is a desired goal for education. If we stop short of this, we sacrifice that which anchors life- the intimate experience--and settle for facts, information, and curriculum. The intimate experience is the one that has been personalized into an answer to the question, "What has this experience to do with my life?" Sooner or later whatever is important enough to learn must be related to the basic issue of what quality of life one chooses to live. It must be related to the ultimate commitment. Therefore meaning-awareness is important to learning and should be the aim and purpose of all education.

#### Education for the Meaning of It.

Professor Phenix of Columbia Teachers College has ultimate commitment in mind as a goal for education when he writes:

The central task of education is religious conversion. This is not to be understood in the conventional sense, as securing commitment to a special organized church or acceptance of one of the traditional creeds. What is meant is the inner transformation of purposes and motive from self-regarding irreligious and the idolatrous service of limited goals to reverent service of the Most High.<sup>6</sup>

The educational task then is to deal with ultimates as the

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<sup>6</sup> Philip H. Phenix, Education and the Common Good: A Moral Philosophy of the Curriculum (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), p. 242.

basic curriculum. It is life that God has given to man and each one is faced with the possibility of an ultimate concern for his own life as well as all life. The ultimate question is then, "What am I going to do with my life?" Whatever meaning education elicits from the individual must be in part an answer to that question. Education for meanings is having information that provides the ability to cope with life, or as Ruesch says, "coping is having relevant information."<sup>7</sup>

### On Religious Education and Science

The question needs to be asked if what has been said so far is to be applied to all areas of learning, including the scientific? The answer is "Yes." It is "yes" because all education today must be "religious" education; that is, it must be education for life-meanings. Education must be religious in the sense that it gives meanings that demand of the individual that his decisions have the potential to humanize and actualize himself and others. Education for meanings means that one's life must count. It means one must bend history, for that is one's duty and one's response to the gift of life.

Whitehead has an idea about education worth mentioning at this time. He wrote in 1949:

We can be content with no less than the old summary of educational ideal which has been current at any time from the dawn of our civilization. The essence of education is that it be religious. . . A religious education is an

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<sup>7</sup>Jurgen Ruesch, Communication: The Social Matrix of Psychiatry, (New York: Norton, 1951), p. 5.

education which inculcates duty and reverence. Duty arises from our potential control over the course of events. Where attainable knowledge could have changed the issue, ignorance has the guilt of vice. And the foundation of reverence is this perception, that the present holds within itself the complete sum of existence, backward and forwards that whole amplitude of time, which is eternity.<sup>8</sup>

If the scientists, or any other group, believe that they are immune from consideration of values, then they become open to the possibility that what they do could produce results similar to the results of value-free education that produced the Nazi scientist. Maslow has pointed out that science and education must consider values. They must be oriented to caring about living. "The scientist now realizes that he may be unable to accept 'religious' answers to religious questions, but the questions themselves are valid."<sup>9</sup> To ask the ultimate question is to be religious. Not to ask these religious questions now seems pathological.<sup>10</sup> All education must be centered on something other than the concern for facts and information, on research and categories. Education must be concerned with the individual's life-style. It must be concerned with man for the 20th century--a new man.

### The New Man

At this time just a few things need to be said concerning the

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<sup>8</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, The Aims of Education and Other Essays, (New York: Mentor Books, 1949), p. 26.

<sup>9</sup> Abraham H. Maslow, Religions, Values, and Peak-Experiences, (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1964), p. 123.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

man of our time. Maslow, in 1962, when writing of our present era and his speculations about it, said:

Life moves far more rapidly now than it ever did before. Think, for instance, of the huge acceleration in rate of growth of facts, of knowledge, of techniques, of innovations, of inventions, of advances in technology. It seems obvious to me that this requires a change in our attitude toward the human being, and toward his relationships to the world. To put it bluntly, we need a different kind of human being. I feel I must take far more seriously today than I did twenty years ago, the Heraclitus, the Whitehead, the Bergson kind of emphasis on the world of flux, a movement, a process, not a static thing. If this is so and it is obviously much more so than it was in 1900 or even in 1930--if this is so, then we need a different kind of human being to be able to live in a world which changes perpetually, which doesn't stand still. I may go so far as to say for the educational enterprise: what's the use of teaching facts? Facts become obsolete so darned fast! What's the use of teaching techniques? The techniques become obsolete so fast!<sup>11</sup>

Maslow has pointed us toward the need to educate persons for a new kind of existence. As has been previously stated, facts, information, techniques simply are the wrong goal. Learning how to live abundantly, creatively, and with the ability to find meaning in lived-experience is the goal for education.

The new man will also need to be able to live without knowing. The meaning of some experience will be just this: there is no way of knowing what is to come. Saul Alinsky, the renowned community organizer, has said that we must learn to live without answers.<sup>12</sup> Answers imply that we can know how our decisions will affect future

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<sup>11</sup> Abraham H. Maslow, The Creative Attitude, (New York: Psychosynthesis Research Foundation, 1963), p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> Saul D. Alinsky, "The Urban Revolution," a lecture delivered at California Institute of Technology, Beckman Auditorium, May 11, 1966.

events. In fact we are often called to decide when the alternatives present no "answer." In Peter Ustinov's picture, "Billy Budd," the captain, on breaking the news of the death sentence, said to Billy concerning why he had to die, "the answer was lost with innocence."

## II. THE PROCESS OF EDUCATION

What is the process that brings meaning out of experience? This is one of the central questions of this work. Up to this point emphasis has been placed on the need to be concerned with education for meanings. But how does this come about? If there is need for a new kind of human being in our time, what is the educational process that helps create this kind of person?

First, it must be said that an educational process is only a part of the answer to meaning. The teacher's ability, communications theory are some of the other things involved. It must be said that there is no one answer to the question of process. What is to be suggested is an answer, not the answer. There are probably many other contributions. We will need to give up our specialist images and return to roles in depth in all levels of work and study and knowledge. We will need to be not only specialists, but interpreters of life in general. We will need to become experts on living.

Whitehead writes about the meaning of "style."

Finally, there should grow the most austere of all mental qualities; I mean the sense for style. It is an aesthetic sense, based on admiration for the direct attainment of a foreseen end, simply and without waste. Style in art, style in literature, style in science, style in logic, style in

practical execution have fundamentally the same aesthetic qualities, namely, attainment and restraint. The love of a subject in itself and for itself, where it is not the sleepy pleasure of pacing a mental quarter-deck, is the love of style as manifested in that study.<sup>13</sup>

Modern man needs an education that has as its aim the development of a style of life. Education for meanings, as herein proposed is at least one possible process toward that end.

### A Difference of Views

There are rather different views of educational process. One view holds that the student should begin with the familiar, the personal. The student should begin his study with the environmental elements with which he is now in contact and then move to the more abstract and general idea. "The device to be avoided is the cramming of general statements which have no references to individual personal experiences."<sup>14</sup> Another view is that which recommends beginning with the general case and becoming aware of what in the general is familiar and personal. This latter is what Bruner calls "the personalization of knowledge," and it is what this paper will use as its introduction to a process of meaning-discovery.

In developing the following theory of process education that has as its goal meaning-awareness or personalization of knowledge, the work of Jerome Bruner has been the inspiration. It should quickly be added that the writer has timidly chosen to alter, or perhaps go

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<sup>13</sup>Whitehead, op. cit., p. 24.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 71.

beyond the implications Bruner has made in his works, The Process of Education, and Toward a Theory of Instruction.<sup>15</sup>

In his work Bruner has set before us what he calls the question of "representation." In "representation" the individual translates experience into the already possessed model of the world. There are probably three ways this takes place, 1) through action, 2) through perceptual organization, extrapolating and reflection, and 3) through symbolic expression.<sup>16</sup> It is this idea that has been taken and expanded here into a process of education for meanings.

If I may personalize for a few moments, I can say that I have found what I am about to unfold to be the most significant answer, so far developed, toward an understanding of my own educational experience. I do not claim it is unique. It certainly is not the only possibility. But it is one important meaning that I now possess. New meanings may demand that at some future time I reformulate the process into something different, but as of now it stands as meaningful in the sense in which meaning is herein defined.

It is now time to examine the process in its three parts.

#### The Beginning of a Meaning--Contact

We do not learn from experiences, ideas, or concepts with which we are already familiar or which we already have adapted to our perceptions. We learn when we are up against something new,

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<sup>15</sup>Jerome S. Bruner, The Process of Education, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960); and Toward a Theory of Instruction, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966).

<sup>16</sup>Bruner, Toward a Theory of Instruction, p. 10.

something that conflicts, or appears to conflict, with our present world model. What is presented to us in the beginning of a learning experience is usually unique, bizarre, even repellent. In fact, the more in conflict and in contrast the initial thing is to our present perceptions, the more likelihood there is for eventual learning.

An illustration of what is meant by action that produces conflict is seen in viewing a motion picture. The action could include reading, hearing, or any other stimulus. However, more than just the senses is included in this first stage of learning. The student quickly reacts to what is being experienced and categorizes, perceptualizes it into something to be avoided or approached. That is, the individual either copes with the experience or uses avoidance behavior. If he avoids the experience, it means either a lack of interest or a conflict situation of an intolerable degree. If the individual stays in the experience, it indicates that coping seems possible. Whether or not the thing is in conflict or contrasts with the world view as it first appears, determines whether or not the learner is up against something. If it is not seen as a conflict, then interest will probably be lost.

To return to the motion picture, Bruner has an excellent illustration of how it was used to produce a contrast out of which meaning later developed. In a course study on "man," some children were shown a film about the life of an Eskimo family. In the film a single nuclear family is followed through the year--spring sealing, summer fishing, fall caribou hunting, early winter fishing through the



ice, winter at the big ceremonial igloo. The children report that at first the members of the Eskimo family (father, mother, and four-year-old son) look weird and uncouth. One of the episodes in the film concerns the four-year-old boy. With his father's help the boy devises a snare and catches a gull. There is a scene in which he stones the gull to death. The children watched horror-struck. One girl cried out that he wasn't even human doing that to a sea-gull.<sup>17</sup> To that girl, and to the children generally, the episode was repelling. It was against their present world view--their perception of what one should do to a gull.

A church adult study seminar was struggling to discover the meaning in a theological paper on "Freedom," by Bonhoeffer. The leader introduced a motion picture as a means of providing the action which would produce conflict. The film was "Requiem for a Heavy-weight." The story concerns a fighter who has come to the end of his career and has to find a new life for himself. The situation with its locker rooms and fight characters was so foreign to what most church men and women know about, that it was bizarre and repellent. It produced a sharp contrast between what they believed was good and acceptable as a mode of living and the mode of existence depicted on the screen.

Most of us have attended classes where the lecture method was used. When the material, the idea, the themes, were presented with clarity it carried with it the possibility of contrast and

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 161.

conflict. As students we were bumping up against the possibility of change in our views--our perceptions--our meanings.

A child faces the same beginning in finding the meaning in learning to perform a new physical feat. One four-year-old in a nursery school gave several indications that she wanted to walk a 1" x 12" board that connected two 24"-high wooden packing boxes set approximately eight feet apart. She made several false starts, each time leaving the task for something else. It seemed obvious she was in conflict within herself as to whether or not this task was possible for her. The task had engaged her. She couldn't yet do it, but she hadn't abandoned the idea either.

What contrast and conflict do is provide the contact for the beginning of learning for meaning. The contact with the learner is a necessary first step. If the learner doesn't avoid the contact, an engagement is made and learning can take place. Now of course even if the student avoids engagement, learning takes place. The student learns to avoid similar events in the future. But for the purposes of this paper learning is related to meaning and even though the meaning may be negative in the sense that it de-humanizes, de-actualizes, and exploits the learner, he does not avoid or cut off the contact.

The action step of the educational process for meanings is the "break open" step. It opens up the possibility for learning and change by presenting a contrast between what the learner now believes and something else.

### Perceptual Organization--Understanding

The second stage of the educational process depends upon perceptual organization and reflection. It is what Bruner refers to as understanding the "structure" of things.<sup>18</sup> To understand the structure of something is to understand how things hang together. It is to discover the pattern of relationships within. The structure of something is its "deeper meaning." The value of understanding structure is that it is transferable, that it can be transferred to other situations for application. As an example of transfer, Bruner mentions the case of "Moby Dick." When the student of literature understands that this is a study of evil and the plight of those who become obsessed, then the structure or inner meaning of the work is understood. This deeper understanding can then be used, or transferred, to a better knowledge of all literature. Teaching that emphasizes the structure of something is probably more helpful and valuable to the less-able student than the gifted one, because the former is the more easily misled by poor teaching.

The teaching and learning of structure, rather than simply the mastery of facts and techniques, is at the center of the classic problem of transfer. If earlier learning is to make later learning easier, it must do so by making the relationship of things learned earlier and later on as clear as possible.<sup>19</sup>

To return to our illustrations in the first step, how will the understanding phase apply? The children who viewed the Eskimo film

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>19</sup>Bruner, The Process of Education, p. 12.

are reported to have engaged in a lengthy discussion about how people have to learn to do things, which are appropriate to their culture. One girl, after experiencing the episode where the four year old stoned the gull to death, said quietly that the boy in an Eskimo family must learn to grow up to be a hunter. She noticed that his mother was smiling as he accomplished the task. Later another youngster remarked that perhaps they (the children) would not be able to get along as well as the Eskimo does with what he has to work with.

What had at first repelled the children was becoming more familiar and was being understood in a beneath-the-surface way. The structure of the events was becoming clear. And most significantly, there was evidence in the discussion among the children that embedded in this contrasting, or what at first appeared to be contrasting, episode was something of "them." This latter is a very necessary part of learning for meaning and will be more fully developed shortly, for it is a part of the last stage.

The church study group mentioned previously is reported to have had a similar experience after viewing the film, "Requiem for a Heavyweight." With the leader's help they too found there was a good deal more of the personal embedded in the film than they at first could realize. Using questions like, "Where did you feel most involved in the story?" the leader helped the students see that there was something of them in what was being seen on the screen. They found that the film had something important to say about how life is.

They began to see that the producer, director, and actors were interested in lifting up important themes, such as integrity, honesty, and identity. They also discovered that there were theological implications to the film. Concepts of sin, redemption, and the idea of priesthood were seen.

The four-year-old girl in the nursery school class was finally able to carefully walk that 1" x 12" board, even though the first time she had to hang onto the teacher's hand. Quickly the task became commonplace with her. She not only could walk it alone, she could stand in the center and jump up and down, joyfully appreciating the thrust of the board--timing each jump to the board's springing action. She was understanding much about the board and her relationship to it. For the present the experience was to be savored.

One class of adult students, in order to understand what a writer was really trying to say in a short paper, used a method of "charting" the content. The directions for charting will be included in Chapter IV, but a word about its use may be helpful here. Charting asks not for a critique in the beginning. It is a means for understanding what is being said by the writer. It requires of the student that he set down the author's ideas and understand the structure within the paper before trying to answer the statement. What charting does is force the student to hear the author out--really to listen to a conflicting idea. It helps create understanding, by requiring the student to listen, then later to test and to begin to reform perceptions.

The second stage of the process for meaning tends to prevent what Whitehead calls, "inert ideas"; ideas that are never utilized, tested, or thrown into fresh combinations.<sup>20</sup> Rather, the understanding phase is to bring the student into position finally to give personal meaning to the educational experience.

#### Personalization--Symbolic Expression

When the four-year-old girl in the nursery school class had bounced up and down for several minutes on the board, and when she had run across it in both directions alone, and had jumped down to the ground from its center point, she exclaimed to the world in general, but to herself in particular, "I didn't know I could. . . it bounces hard." In Professor Bruner's class studying the Eskimo he reports that one boy finally asked of a classmate, "What would you do if you were there?"<sup>21</sup> The teacher of the church adult group asked his students this question after viewing the film, "What message comes to you out of this experience regarding your own existence?" All of these activities illustrate an essential point: if an educational experience is to elicit meaning it must finally be personalized. Then in order for that meaning to become a part of the individual's perceptions in a way that influences his decisions, it needs to be expressed--to be symbolized. This is the point at which I think Whitehead and Bruner are not separate, but together.

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<sup>20</sup>Whitehead, op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>21</sup>Bruner, Toward a Theory of Instruction, p. 161.

Earlier Whitehead was quoted as negating the teaching of "general statements that have no personal meaning," and most of us would agree to that. What Bruner is suggesting, and what is here advocated, is that there be an effort to help the student discover what there is that's personal in the general. "To personalize experience one does not simply link it to the familiar. Rather one makes the familiar an instance of the more general case and thereby produces awareness of it."<sup>22</sup> It is the experience of discovering what there is in the contrast that has kinship and likeness. "What the children were learning about was not seagulls and Eskimos, but about their own feelings and preconceptions that, up to then, were too implicit to be recognizable to them."<sup>23</sup>

The important thing about the third step of the process is that it is usually left out! So often we are presented with a contrast, a new idea, a different point of view and then are never given the opportunity to personalize it. An excellent argument for term papers is that they do provide just this kind of experience in one form, when the student is allowed to make them his own symbolic expression of meaning. But other forms of personalizing knowledge are perhaps even better than the paper and need to be explored as possible symbolic expressions of meaning. For example, the amateur film, the novel, the play, poetry, along with painting, drawing, sculpture and the like.

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

It is the self-understandings, the ideas, the re-formulation of conceptions that gives meaning to the educational experience. When the learner attempts to communicate that meaning, symbolic expression is used. It may take many forms, but generally language is the form. However, the painter and musician are also expressing meaning, if not with reference to present experience, then to earlier experiences. The expression of meaning is symbolic interaction. The meanings are not found in the symbols themselves but in the people who use the symbolic events. Therefore, what it means to the sender may be different from what it means to the receiver, for the person receiving the communication gives his own meaning to the symbolic interaction, and he does so according to his own perceptions and experience. "There are no right meanings to a symbol, only the meanings people have."<sup>24</sup> Therefore communication in education is not to be thought of as a transfer of ideas and information, but rather as a selection and expression of the symbols which have the greatest possibility, or probability, of eliciting the intended meaning from the student. This leads the discussion to a brief mention of instructional theory.

### Instructional Theory

A process of education must be tied to a theory of instruction. If, as Berlo has suggested, the meaning is in the person not the

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<sup>24</sup>David K. Berlo, "Communication Theory," in his Keynote Address before the Department of Audio-visual Instruction of the NEA. Taken from a tape recording.



symbol, then the symbol used to elicit meaning must be carefully chosen in order that there is a strong possibility that what is intended to be gained is that which is gained.

The Eskimo film was an effective instructional tool because it had in its general message, symbols that had a strong probability of the personal within them. The children could identify with and personalize these symbols. The instruction used must consider the intent of the message and the status of the learner.<sup>25</sup> Bruner reminds us that, "structure must always be related to status and gifts of the learner."<sup>26</sup>

Instructional theory must therefore consider:

1. The kinds of experiences that most effectively present a conflict and therefore contact with the learner.
2. The kinds of experiences that most effectively involve the learner in a concerted effort really to understand the message, the structure, or the possibilities of the situation.
3. The kinds of experiences that encourage the learner to symbolize and express the personal significance--the interpretation of the meaning--to the experience.
4. The kinds of symbols that have the greatest probability of eliciting the intended meaning from the learner.
5. An understanding and incorporation into the curriculum of

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Bruner, Toward a Theory of Instruction, p. 41.

the intent of the sender and the status of the receiver which determines the choice and treatment of symbols.

In summary, this process of education has the possibility of eliciting meaning out of each educational experience. Meaning, it is believed, is not transmitted in the process itself. That is, it is not carried in the message that passes between the teacher and pupil. The meaning is already within the pupil but the process elicits the meaning as the pupil is, 1) contacted, 2) challenged to understand the structure of knowledge, and 3) encouraged to symbolize, or personalize, the meaning that is within. The meaning is the pupil's awareness of how he personally reacts to the experience. Each meaning is a little insight, or appreciation that contributes to the pupil's own self-understanding.

## CHAPTER III

### CREATING THE POINT OF CONTACT

This paper has already announced the need to make contact with people in order for them to learn. It is certain that we cannot teach where there are no students. It is also probable that nothing will be learned by students who are present but are not aroused, or if contact with them is not made.

This chapter deals with creating contact as the first step in the learning process. Getting the learner's attention in order that some meaning to the learning experience be elicited.

In the first section of this chapter, attention is given to the setting for learning. The sociological, psychological, and theological significance of setting will be explored as it is related to education for meanings. Setting, and the effect of setting, influences curriculum design and planning and therefore commands attention.

The next section deals with understanding symbols and the use of symbols for establishing contact. Finally, there is a discussion of the use of media, which in turn influences contact.

#### I. SETTING

Somehow students must be motivated to want to learn. They must be brought to attention. For adults, it will probably be when

they feel they are going to be helped; when a problem can be resolved.

One of the ways the learner is contacted, or brought to attention, is through the setting in which the educational experience takes place. The setting is usually not considered to be important to education. The most general feeling is probably that an adult class can be held anywhere. And in the church they can be spotted assembled in a variety of places.

One of the points to be made in this chapter is that the setting is important, for it contributes to the possibility of contact-conflict, the first step of the educational process.

Setting is defined as the "place" where students feel up against life, or issues. I use the word place in quotes because we have the know-how to create real-life settings apart from the real situation. For example, through the use of jargon, props, case studies, films, etc., we can transport ourselves psychologically to the "place" we want to be. However, this is never an equal substitute for actually being where the issues are, and wherever it can be accomplished, education should coincide with lived experience that is real and not simulated.

The best setting for learning is where the problems to be dealt with are live issues. For example, one reason for making parent education a part of the nursery school would be that mothers, and fathers too, can receive their parent education in relationship to, and possibly at or even during the school, where there is a greater possibility that learning will have meaning. There are

psychological, sociological, and theological reasons for the real setting.

### Psychological Reasons for the Real Setting

The importance of setting, psychologically, is that adults learn best by being involved and exposed to issues as they learn about them.

. . . the adult classroom in even the most perfectly designed Christian education wing in suburbia may be far less conducive to the kind of adult Christian learning we are talking about here (learning for living) than a quite unholy atmosphere of a noisy crowded company lunchroom or business district cafeteria.<sup>1</sup>

Most often adult education takes place in a classroom apart from the world of action. There is evidence to support the view that adults, better than children, learn more quickly and with more retention, when learning coincides with action.<sup>2</sup>

Exposure to issues and problems where they are alive tends to call present values into question. Subjected to conflict situations the learner is contacted, so to speak. The conflict comes about because of the difference between what the individual is presently confronted with and what is already valued.

A young mother, given to being somewhat meticulous and scrupulous about cleanliness, enrolled her four-year-old son in a

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<sup>1</sup>David J. Ernsberger, Education for Renewal (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965), p. 138.

<sup>2</sup>"Eight Steps to Better Training," Nations Business (March 1961), a reprint. The research of Columbia and Stanford Universities in adult learning is cited, as is the work of the Center for the Study of Liberal Education of Adults, in Chicago.

nursery school where freedom to play and to explore were encouraged by the teachers. There was easy availability to sand, water, and mud as play materials. As the child became more at ease in these surroundings and began to play more with these plastic materials he also became messier. The conflict that this created for the mother is obvious. What is not obvious, but important, is that in this conflict she was contacted. She challenged this kind of activity with the teachers. It could be said that she was at first repelled by this approach to nursery school experiences. Through the resultant exchange of ideas the mother was helped. In a few weeks time, and because of an accepting relationship extended by the teachers, this young mother came to an understanding of the need of children to be able to engage in this kind of play. She also came to a better understanding of herself. She eventually became a helping teacher in the school and her understanding increased as she was afforded the opportunity to watch children at play while at the same time engaging in discussion with other teachers about the needs of play. She finally was aware that she had been raised exactly as she was raising her son. "Getting so dirty just didn't seem right to me at first," was the way she put it.

The other teachers believe that the greatest help for this mother came when she began to see children at play, and not just after they were dirty. There was an intersection between the issue-- getting dirty--and the values of this kind of play, that could have happened only in the setting. Talking about play and the use of plastic materials, apart from the setting, would not have contacted

this mother as easily. She was psychologically involved and exposed in the setting. An educational process in the setting helped her to new meanings about child play and her beliefs about this kind of play.

The point is that the real setting, where the issues arise, is where contact for education is easiest to create. Where education is not possible in a setting that is real, there are ways to create a simulated setting that approaches the real in effect.

Through the use of media like art, music, film, recordings, language, and written materials, the skilled educator can psychologically reproduce the real setting. The case-study method is one way of attempting to do this, but other ways also are used. What the educator must consider in establishing a setting are: 1) the status of the students, 2) the language and symbols and thought-forms that will create the setting, 3) the methods of instruction to be used, 4) the needs the students bring, 5) the needs of the students that the teacher is aware of, 6) evaluation and feedback. These are the same elements that are involved in curriculum design.

#### Sociological Reasons for the Real Setting

A major problem with all of education has been the failure of educators to consider the relationship of teaching and learning to the social matrix in which teaching and learning take place. Put in another way, the social status of the learner must be considered in planning curriculum.

In a pioneer essay on "The Sociology of Knowledge," Mannheim

tied the problem of the learning process solidly to the individual's social context.

. . . the living forces and the actual attitudes which underlie the theoretical ones are by no means merely of an individual nature, i.e., they do not have their origin in the first place in the individual's becoming aware of his interests in the course of his thinking. Rather, they arise out of the individual, and in the prescribed outlook of which he merely participates. In this connection, it becomes more clear that a large part of thinking and knowing cannot be correctly understood, as long as its connection with existence or with the social implications of human life are not taken into account.<sup>3</sup>

Mannheim is speaking to the task of education. There must be a relationship between the setting and the educational task. The setting must reflect the social context in which the problems arise. If information is just presented, either because the educator, the students, or both, assume it satisfies the need, there may be disappointment. If information is instead the bridge between the problem and a resulting meaning for the student, more is gained.

In education the setting must contribute to the educational process by making a reality out of the educational experience. Sociologically speaking, the setting in education must be real.

In terms of curriculum design and sociology of setting, the factors that would influence setting would be the education level of the students, economic security, social pressures, housing, locale, and other such factors. These will determine whether the actual

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<sup>3</sup>Karl Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia, (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1952), pp. 240-41.



setting is a possibility, and if not the consideration of them will be necessary in establishing some semblance of the real. Students learn best where they feel at ease and where socially the atmosphere is friendly.

We expect Christian education to train people to be servants to the world. This requires them to become social critics. They should be able to point to where theology and sociology intersect and be able to interpret the significance of change and its meaning for the church. Especially must parents be able to do this for their families. In order for the church to be able to bring the gospel message to those outside the church its laymen must be knowledgeable in matters of social structures, economics, political pressures, and the social implications of these on the family, community, nation and world. The sociological aspects of setting contribute to the possibility of creating a point of contact with the learner.

#### Theological Reason for the Real Setting

"The reality of God discloses itself only by setting one entirely in the reality of the world."<sup>4</sup> This theological statement by Bonhoeffer tends to push us right out of our sheltered environment into the world. Is it not the reality of God we Christians are seeking with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength?

The church, if it has been created for service to the world, exists for the sake of all men. Bonhoeffer reflects further on the

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<sup>4</sup>Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship, (New York: Macmillan, 1963), p. 51.

reality of God and his world when he says that in Christ these two are a unity. "There is no possibility of partaking of one without the other."<sup>5</sup>

If students desire to find the reality of God, according to Bonhoeffer, it will only be as they encounter him in the reality of their world, i.e., in their jobs, in their homes, in every area of their lives. ". . . the true meaning of life is to be found in the world rather than within man or his own psyche as though it were a closed system."<sup>6</sup> Frankl's comment here tends to support the thesis. It will be more profitable for the students to theologize (to see how God is acting in the world) in the setting. Apart from the world there is less possibility of contact. As students are reacting and deciding in the real setting there is greater probability that the conflict between what they are and what they should be will become evident. God's Word is heard in reality. It comes to man in his facing reality. For man to avoid reality is to avoid the possibility of being confronted by God's Word as a contradicting element.

The idea of an intersection between the issues or problems of man's existence and the gospel message as an answer, has already been suggested. The contribution of the real setting is that such an intersection is much more a possibility. In the earlier illustration of the young mother her realization of how she had been

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Viktor Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning, (New York: Washington Square Press, 1963), p. 175.

interfering with her son's freedom of expression because of her need to have him neat and clean was a liberating understanding for her. This meaning humanized both the mother and son. It was her education within the setting, where the problems and information came together that helped bring about the change.

The setting should be made as real as possible. It should speak of issues and problems that are alive, and so provide increased probability that the curriculum and instruction will bring a contact with students. The contact, usually made through contrasting ideas, then opens the way for the process of learning to take place out of which meanings come.

## II. SYMBOLS AND CONTACT

James Sellers has written a lively book in which he discusses the communication of God's Word to "outsiders."<sup>7</sup> The outsider is described as one of two kinds. He is either a confessed outsider but really a "hidden" Christian, or he claims to be a Christian but is really an "outsider."<sup>8</sup> It is a point of Seller's book that to reach either of these groups of outsiders with the word of God communication must be in terms that are not familiarly religious. The "hidden" Christian is suspicious of the church's familiar modes of communication. He has probably already rejected these as

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<sup>7</sup>James E. Sellers, The Outsider and the Word of God, (New York: Abingdon Press, 1961).

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

irrelevant. The Christian who is really an "outsider" is the piously religious type who, sure that he is Christian, is merely oblivious to the Word couched in familiar terms because he believes them anyway and applies his own meaning to them.

The answer to this communication problem is in finding new forms and new symbols for communicating the authentic Christian message. The authentic Christian message, Sellers suggests, is that which produces the conflict between what God calls man to be and what man is when he asserts himself and seeks to live by his own devices. In this conflict man is contacted.

### The Nature of Symbol

Throughout, the word symbol has repeatedly been used, Sellers suggests something of the nature of this important concept.

A symbol is also a communicative entity which stands for something else. We use symbols for economy or shorthand purposes just as we do signs; but symbols are ways of communicating what is transcendent to experience. They stand for reality beyond what is here and now known. . . . Just as signs are ways of communicating about the problems of existence, so symbols are ways of communicating about the nature and mysteries of life.<sup>9</sup>

Bruner, who speaks mostly about cognitive learning and language when referring to symbols, nevertheless acknowledges symbols as a means of communicating in ways that have, "nothing to do with reality. . ."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>10</sup>Jerome Bruner, Toward a Theory of Instruction, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 12.

In another of his works<sup>11</sup> Bruner discusses the knowing of experience. It is generally understood that experience, for many people, is arid and, in terms of meaning is dehumanizing. Lived experience is often distorted by fear. Persons who fear experience have blocks to learning and tend to relate, or tie together, things that are in reality unrelated. The individual is immobilized by this fear and becomes inefficient as a learner. "What is," Bruner asks, "the artifice that creates illumination rather than illness?"<sup>12</sup>

The answer, Bruner believes, is in providing a way for the individual to experience creativity. To experience creativity is to experience what Bruner calls "effective surprise."<sup>13</sup> And "effective surprise," a product of creative enterprise, is that experiencing of reality that takes one beyond the common ways of experiencing the world. It is the opening of the individual to increasing depth of feeling and experiencing, which in turn makes him more open to learning.<sup>14</sup>

The techniques necessary to lead one to "effective surprise," or a transcendence of reality, are found in arts and in myth especially. "Experience and myth are somehow related--complimentary."<sup>15</sup> Where fear blocks learning and tends to relate things that are at

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<sup>11</sup>Jerome Bruner, On Knowing, Essays for the Left Hand, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962).

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

depth unrelated, myth internalizes and thereby makes connections between seemingly unrelated things. Myth internalizes the human condition and carries within it the power to attract other human identifications. The deeper meanings of experience are laid bare. Myth is a series of symbols woven into a story about man's relation to transcendent reality.<sup>16</sup>

The point is that symbolism has within it the possibility of creating "effective surprise," or an openness to experience that brings the learner up against life. Symbol and myth have the possibility of making a contact for learning. They can "open up" the learner. They can begin the process whereby we see what is personal in what at first seemed impersonal, even repellent or absurd. Myth and symbol help us find the transcendent reality that is embedded in the general and seemingly unrelated.

#### The Dialogic Character of Symbols

Whitehead has written, "we may conceive of symbolism as consisting on the one hand of 'symbols' and on the other hand of 'the meaning' of the symbols."<sup>17</sup> Because the symbol itself and its meaning are distinguishable components, the same symbol may have different meanings for different people. As Berlo reminds us, "meanings are not found in the symbols themselves, but are found

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<sup>16</sup> Sellers, p. 111.

<sup>17</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, Symbolism: Its Meaning and Effect, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1928), p. 9.

in the people who use the symbols as communication events."<sup>18</sup>

The Christian educator must realize that the symbols used will find their meaning in the recipient and this will vary as they "fill in" the meaning according to their own status, or social matrix, and the resulting perceptual field.

Returning to Seller's argument against using traditional Christian symbols in reaching the "outsider." We are thrown up against two important questions. "What symbols shall we use to reach the 'outsider'?" "How will these symbols be used to make contact with the 'outsider'?" The later question will be discussed under the use of media.

As to what symbols to use, Sellers has already suggested that new ones must be found to go along with the old. The religious communicator can make use of the symbols familiar to his recipients, as well as those symbols that are familiar to his own background. In fact this may be the only way to elicit the meaning he desires: that is, to borrow symbols from the social matrix of the receivers he has in mind. For his "own" symbols (his Christian symbols) which express meaning to himself might express quite the opposite to the receivers.<sup>19</sup>

The Christian educator must conserve old symbols and find new ones. Each age and time has created symbols to express transcendent

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<sup>18</sup>David K. Berlo, "Communication Theory," from the Keynote Address to the Department of Audio-visual Instruction of the NEA. From tape recording.

<sup>19</sup>Sellers, op. cit.

meaning. Each age has developed its own way of expressing the mysteries of life. The accepted symbols often have value and can be used with the intent to give them new meaning. It is in the revisions that new symbols are created. "The educator must be prepared to explain old symbols with new, ancient myth with modern, wherever he decides he must."<sup>20</sup>

What takes place then is symbol evoking new symbol. This is symbolic interaction. A symbol is dialogical when it obtains an anticipated response in the form of a corresponding symbol expressing the meaning of the recipient. "Old symbols must be explained--but they can be explained only by other symbols, some of which may be new."<sup>21</sup>

A part of the Christian educator's task will be finding new symbols that will elicit the meaning of the old. If this is not done the old symbols may increasingly be given meanings that are farther and farther from the gospel message.

The symbols of the Church have become strengthless. The "word" no longer sounds through its speech. Society no longer understands it. And vice versa the work of society has become empty, and into its vacuum powers of the anti-divine, of the untrue and unjust, have forced their way, the very power which it wanted to escape.<sup>22</sup>

Tillich is lifting a note of warning about barren symbols. It points to a need of the church and the world. Sellers suggests

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 112.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Paul Tillich, The Interpretation of History, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), pp. 238-39.



that Biblical and churchly symbols must be supplemented and explained by secular symbols if communication with those outside the circle of faith is to be made. Two things, quite interrelated, are involved. The first is that the meaning of Biblical symbols will need to be transferred to secular symbols. Secondly, communications efforts should be aimed at removing secular meanings from the traditional Biblical and churchly symbols.

It is because the mysterious biblical symbols have declined into problem-centered signs that we look for secular symbols to restore appreciation of the gospel. For example, it is because hell has become a place and hence a scientific absurdity that we must call on psychological and psychiatric symbols of guilt and damnation; but the intent should always be to restore the depth of the biblical conception of sin. The religious communicator who believes that he can speak the biblical message by sticking only to the biblical symbols sooner or later finds his message in 'slow atrophy'. The symbols with which we must communicate about the gospel were not created by God in a grand moment of revelation at the beginning of the biblical era; they are continuously being created by him and used by us, even though we use them to speak a final truth that will never become more true.<sup>23</sup>

What then are the symbols that can reach the outsider? Anything that has within it the probability that it will elicit a meaning from the recipient which speaks of transcendence, and whatever by communication relates seemingly unrelated things can be a useable symbol. For Christian education, whatever reveals to man that he is related and bound to a Creator in a unique way, or conveys the authentic gospel is a symbol. Whatever confronts and contacts man through the conflict between God's word and man's predicament is a useable

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<sup>23</sup>Sellers, op. cit., p. 113.

symbol. Usually language is thought of as the form of symbols. But symbols today take many forms- pictures, films, music, drama, the novel, and a variety of other things. At times these media have the power of communicating transcendence that language does not have. The educator will need to add to his training and knowledge an understanding of culture and its symbols, and the relationship of symbols to contact for learning through lived experience and the interpretation of that experience.

### III. CONTACT THROUGH MEDIA

Media can be elicitors of meaning. Media can "open up", can shape and promote human association. Through the use of media the educator can make contact with students. Media are not only the carriers of symbols, they can be the symbols. For the message of any medium is the truth about life that it illuminates in the recipient.

If media are themselves symbols which elicit meaning within the recipients, then the educator using media as symbols must consider the cultural matrix within which the particular medium operates. As has been repeatedly emphasized, the educator must know the status of the students for the status of the students will influence the selection of media.

But the media, by directed use of language, thought-forms, color, structure, and meter, create experiences that contact the receiver. The media itself create something in which others can

participate and find depth involvement and relationship to the transcendent. To the extent that media do this, they become symbols in themselves.

To illustrate, the medium of drama may be used in parent education to face the problems in parent-child relationships and to increase the understanding of these relationships. Parents frequently express anxiety over the nature of their own parent-child relationships as they exist in the family. Through the use of drama, an awareness of deep significance can occur. In the Arthur Miller play, Death of a Salesman, there are many illustrations of Willy Loman's inability to face reality. He lived in a world of illusions, and especially in regard to his sons. "Biff", for example, was not the boy his father had created in his own mind. In the play there is a scene in which "Biff" brings this very truth to his father. "Biff" tells his father that he (the father) has never faced up to the truth about the sons--that is, to the kind of persons they really are. It is a moving and powerful symbol of what it costs to live in an illusory world. A parent, on seeing this play and then afterward discussing the significance with other parents, could with the help of a skillful educator, be moved by the power of the symbol into seeing beyond that experience into his own experience and life. The parent may see that there is something of himself in this play. In a real sense he is "Willy Loman". Perhaps he has created an unreal image of his child that has robbed their relationship of its quality. Or this play can be read by a group of parents with the same result. Sometimes a small portion,

perhaps one scene, from a powerful drama can produce a great deal of involvement and contact with the participants.

A painting can do the same thing. When confronted by a painting, a group of adults can be led to find a great deal of meaning in their own expression of the painting as a symbol of reality. Bruner has said that art provides a connectedness whereby one discovers that image or symbol that unites dissimilar experiences at some deeper emotional level of meaning.<sup>24</sup>

Media have great value as a means of bringing a contact for education, especially as the first step of creating a conflict between revealed experience and our present perceptions. These media are not only a way of talking about reality, they are reality. They can contact the student and awaken him to new truth. They can point to that transcendent reality which gives ultimate meaning to our existence.

In summary, this chapter has intended to speak primarily to the first step in the educational process for meaning--namely, a contact with the student. Through a serious attention to the setting, to symbols, and use of various media the educator has the possibility of creating a contact for learning.

If skillfully done, the student finds himself in a situation where he is forced to consider giving up something now held. Whether or not something will be given up is determined through an understanding of what has been presented. It is this understanding

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<sup>24</sup>Bruner, On Knowing, Essays for the Left Hand, p. 63.

that is the second step of the educational process, and the subject of the next chapter.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE SEARCH FOR UNDERSTANDING

The second major phase of education for meanings is the understanding or reflective stage. It is what Bruner refers to in his second stage of intellectual development as the "iconic" stage,<sup>1</sup> or the stage in which the learner strives to see the wholeness or gestalten of what is presented. In this chapter the discussion will focus primarily on this second stage.

The main points to be developed are, 1) education needs a theory of communication in order that there be the greatest possibility for understanding through the use of such theory, and 2) that in the educator lies another key to the pupil gaining the understanding necessary to elicit meanings that can humanize, actualize, and facilitate change. Through the educator's skill as a teacher students are able to seek out and find new perceptions and meanings for their own lives. The two points above are made by first presenting a theory of communication and then discussing the skills of the educator.

#### I. COMMUNICATION AND UNDERSTANDING

It has already been suggested that for meaning to be elicited

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<sup>1</sup>Jerome Bruner, Toward a Theory of Instruction (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 11.

within the student and then expressed overtly, there must be an educational process at work that intends to allow meaning to be expressed. Such expression of meaning is preceded by a contact with the learner and a desire to understand the educational experience. All of this implies human communication. There is communication within the educational process itself--that is, between the participants; and communication within the individual himself. There is the communication from the pupil to others concerning the meaning of the experience. In this section a model for communication is offered as well as a discussion of its implications and workings.

#### A Communication Model

It should be evident that the entire process of education is highly dependent on effective communication. It is true of all learning that there must be effective communication. As Hora has put it, "to understand himself man needs to be understood by another. To be understood by another he needs to understand the other."<sup>2</sup>

At this point in the paper a model for understanding effective communication is submitted. It will be obvious that it applies to, and enlightens, the whole process of education. It is presented here because what has been developed up to this point can now be set into a graphic model, and this in turn can become a symbol of communication with significant meanings.

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<sup>2</sup>Thomas Hora, "Tao, Zen, and Existential Psychotherapy," Psychologia, II (1959), 236-242.

The following model is one offered by Hulett,<sup>3</sup> and is based on the thought of George Herbert Mead. Professor Mead's work in social-psychology in the early 1920's begins with a concept of the individual as an entity who is a product of the social system, and also an integral part of that system by virtue of the fact that by socialization he has incorporated the structure and dynamic of the social system itself. This was and is the general position of what is presently called "symbolic interactionism."

Hulett has taken Mead's work and applied it to communication theory. The result is a model of communications that provides certain advantages for use in the educational process for meanings.

First, the model takes as its starting point a more or less naturalistic approach to the act of communication, which would be seen as a social process in which some of the events take place within and others take place between the individuals involved. Naturalistic means the gestalt outlook, the total approach to life. The "figure" that receives the immediate attention is to be seen against the "ground" that surrounds that figure. Structural units and mechanisms of the communicative reality here described are best understood as molar units. This is the form in which they are

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<sup>3</sup>J. Edward Hulett, Jr., "A Symbolic Interactionist Model of Human Communication," Communication Review, XIV:1 (Spring 1966); XIV:2 (Summer 1966). Part I: "The General Model of Social Behavior: The Message--Generating Process," pp. 5-33; Part II: "The Receiver's Function; Psthology of Communication: Non-Communication," pp. 203-220. Hulett is one of the first to take Mead's work and use it as a basis for a theory of communication. See also: Paul E. Pfuetze, Self, Society, Existence, Chapter II, "Mead's Doctrine of Mind, Self and Society," (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954), pp. 37-116; for a good summary on Mead's thought.



experienced by communicating individuals. This has an advantage over concepts that use molecular units that explicate the underlying fine structure. Yet, any model based on molar units implies assumptions about phenomena described in molecular concepts.<sup>4</sup>

The second advantage of the symbolic interactionism model is that it posits a single, but multilevel, system within which the act of communication occurs, and provides a system wherein the interconnections between the various phases of the educational process are shown as occurring both within and between individuals, e.g. the teacher and pupil.

Hulett points out that building a model of communication must properly begin with a more general model of interpersonal behavior, which Mead called the "social act."<sup>5</sup>

Mead's social act is taking a social event in its dynamic whole--no part is understood by itself. We get at social process from inside as well as outside. We observe activity but do not ignore the inner experience of the individual. It is the act that's important.<sup>6</sup>

There are five phases in the individual's instigation-action sequence: 1) the motivating stimulus, 2) the covert rehearsal, 3) the instrumental act, 4) the environmental event, 5) the goal response. In Figure 1, we see a diagram that illustrates Mead's concept of the social act. Some comments concerning it are as follows:

- 1) In the covert rehearsal stage (the heart of the process)

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<sup>4</sup>Hulett, op. cit., pp. 8-9.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

the individual interprets the motivating stimulus input pattern and organizes his forthcoming response--his instrumental act.

2) Both Alpha and Beta go through all five phases but not simultaneously--they are out of phase.

- a. Alpha acts and in the third phase provides a motivating stimulus to Beta.
- b. Beta begins the first phase and at the third stage offers a response that serves as the fourth stage of Alpha--the environmental event.
- c. Alpha's fifth phase--the goal response--serves as the environmental event for Beta's goal response.

3) The second pair of feedback loops (b and b') provide control circuits for the respective behavior sequence of each participant. If Beta's instrumental act does not produce the environmental event Alpha expected, he can repeat the signal in an altered form. Successive alterations can be made. As additional Beta's are added the model immediately becomes more complicated. Beta can become representative of categories of individuals having similar characteristics.

4) Alpha plans and rehearses the Instrumental Act to insure that it will have the highest probability of getting the response desired from Beta. This Alpha does because he wants to get the response from Beta that will allow Alpha to make the desired goal response. Beta also rehearses covertly. But Beta's assessment of the situation is never 100% of Alpha's. Therefore, the problematic element is introduced.

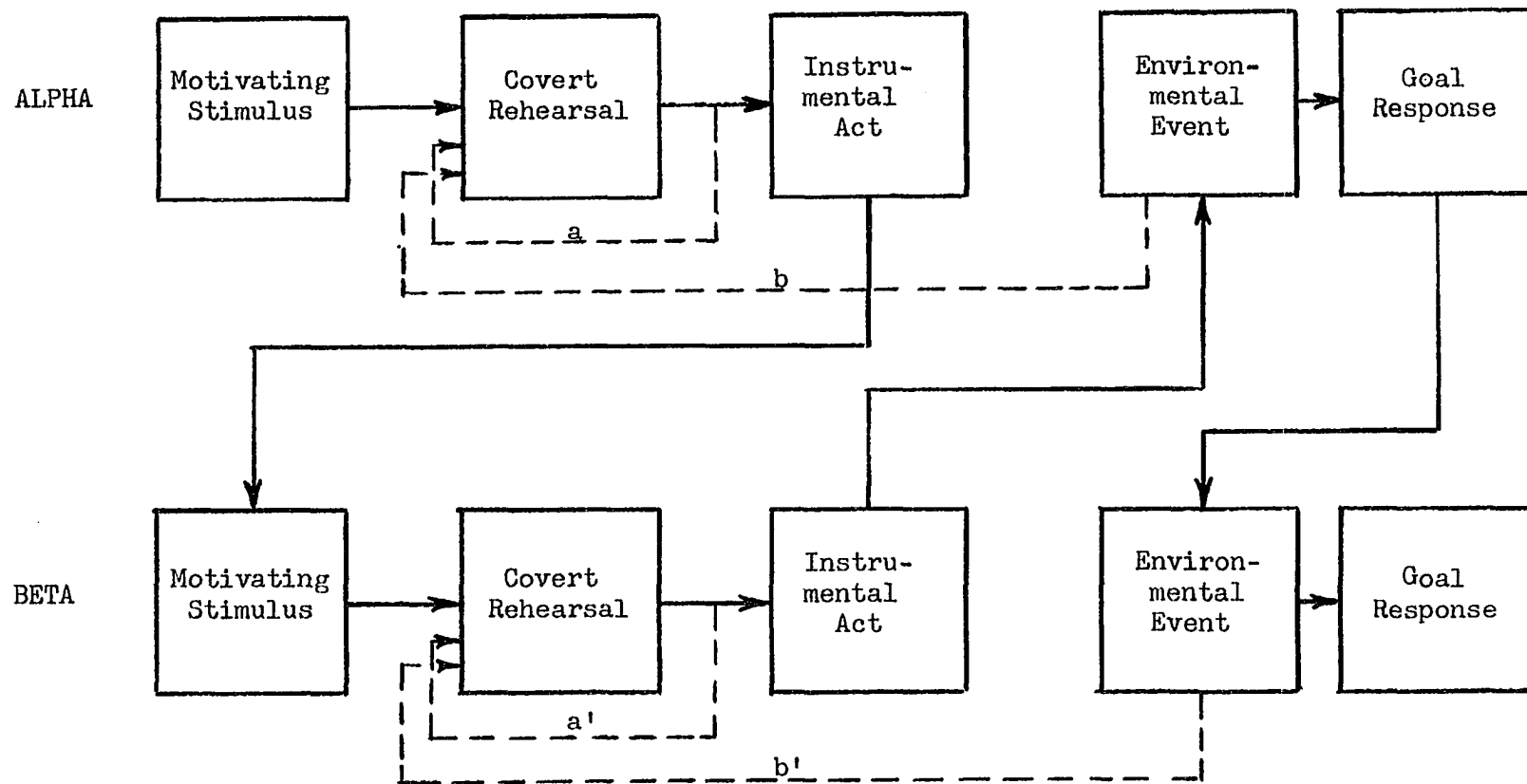


Figure 1. Mead's concept of the "social act."

In Figure 2, Hulett has diagrammed the heart of the process-- the covert rehearsal stage. Here is seen Mead's emphasis on the inner dynamic and its relationship to the significant other. The first pair of feedback loops (a and a') provide the internal means of adjustment of the instrumental act by the process of rehearsal. The individual is involved in assessment of his own and the other's self concepts, the respective roles, and social situations. He practices his instrumental act by role playing and role taking. Alpha can only operate on the basis of what he knows.

Hulett then makes an application of the model to interpersonal behavior called communication. First, related to the originator, the encoder of the message:

- 1) Alpha can only be seen as attaining a goal if Beta can be induced to perform some act. The inducement is to come by some vocal or other symbolic act.
- 2) The input that motivates Alpha to attain a goal comes from outside or within.
- 3) Alpha's task is to design a signal that will be accepted by Beta as an input.
- 4) Beta then decodes by transferring the input symbol pattern into stimuli that will activate the appropriate processes in his own behavior in the way desired by Alpha. The change may be cognitive (as in passing information from Alpha to Beta), or change of attitude, opinion value, or the performance of some overt action.
- 5) Transmission is completed when Alpha receives a signal from Beta that Beta has performed the change desired by Alpha. A completed communication transaction between two or more individuals is a completed social act.<sup>7</sup>

#### The Model as It Applies to the Educational Process

Hulett's model provides the needed illustration of the communication process that is at work in the educational process

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

# COVERT REHEARSAL

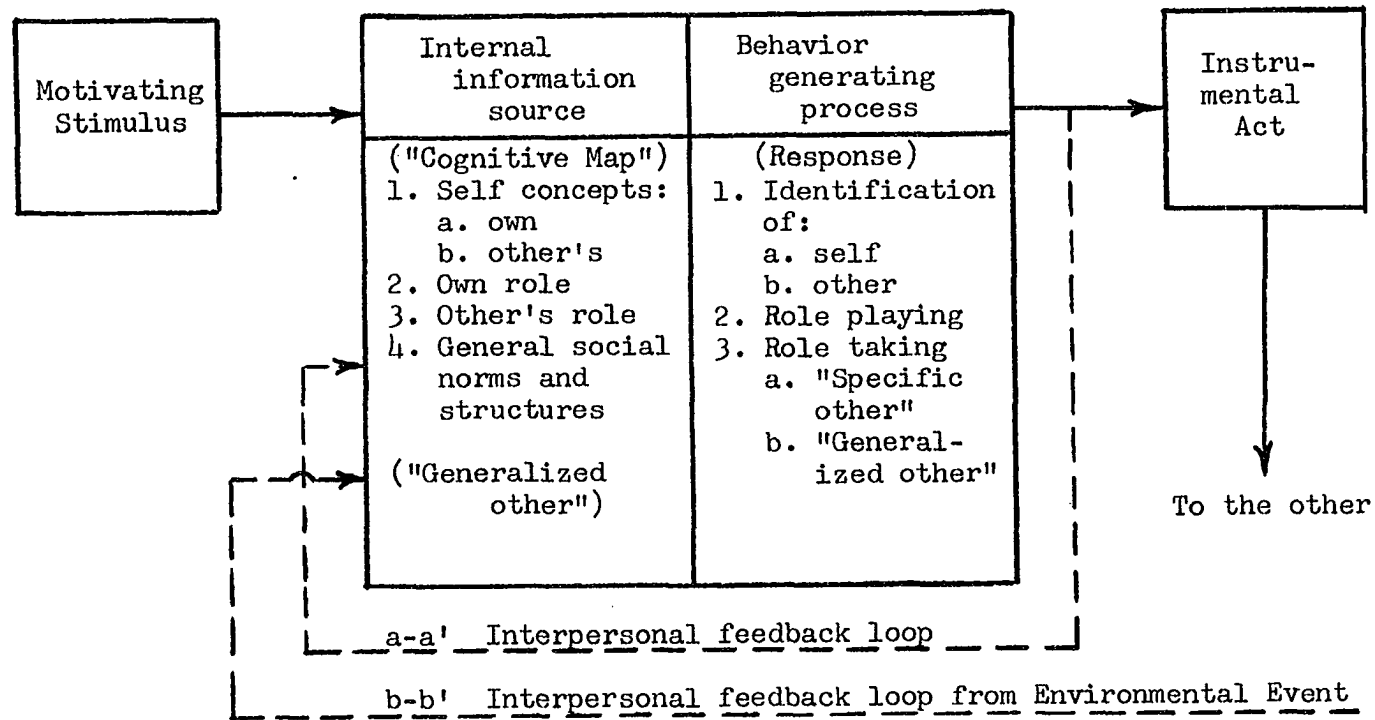


Figure 2. The Covert Rehearsal phase of the social act.

for meaning. In Figure 3, the illustration which Hulett created from Mead's thought and adapted to a theory of communication, is further adapted here to explain the process of education. Additional titles are given to the various phases of the process to correspond with the stages of education as outlined in this paper.

Referring to Figure 3, Alpha and Beta have been changed to the "Teacher" and "Pupil" respectively. The process involves the following educational-communicational phases:

- 1) The teacher, through curriculum design, planning, and instructional theory rehearses the proper Instrumental Act that has the greatest probability of eliciting a meaning response from the pupil. The rehearsal and act are the result of a motivation to humanize the pupil through communication and by the process of education.

- 2) The teacher's symbolic Instrumental Act presents a contrast to the pupil--a conflict situation in which the pupil is contacted.

- 3) The pupil rehearses, covertly, his own Instrumental Act. He constructs the act which he feels will most nearly indicate to the teacher that the stage desired by the teacher has been accomplished.

- 4) The teacher evaluates the Instrumental Act of the pupil and determines whether or not his own previous Instrumental Act was received correctly. If the teacher is not satisfied with the Environmental Event produced by the pupil, that is if it will not allow the teacher to proceed toward a Goal Response (evidence of learning and change), then feedback to the Covert Rehearsal stage

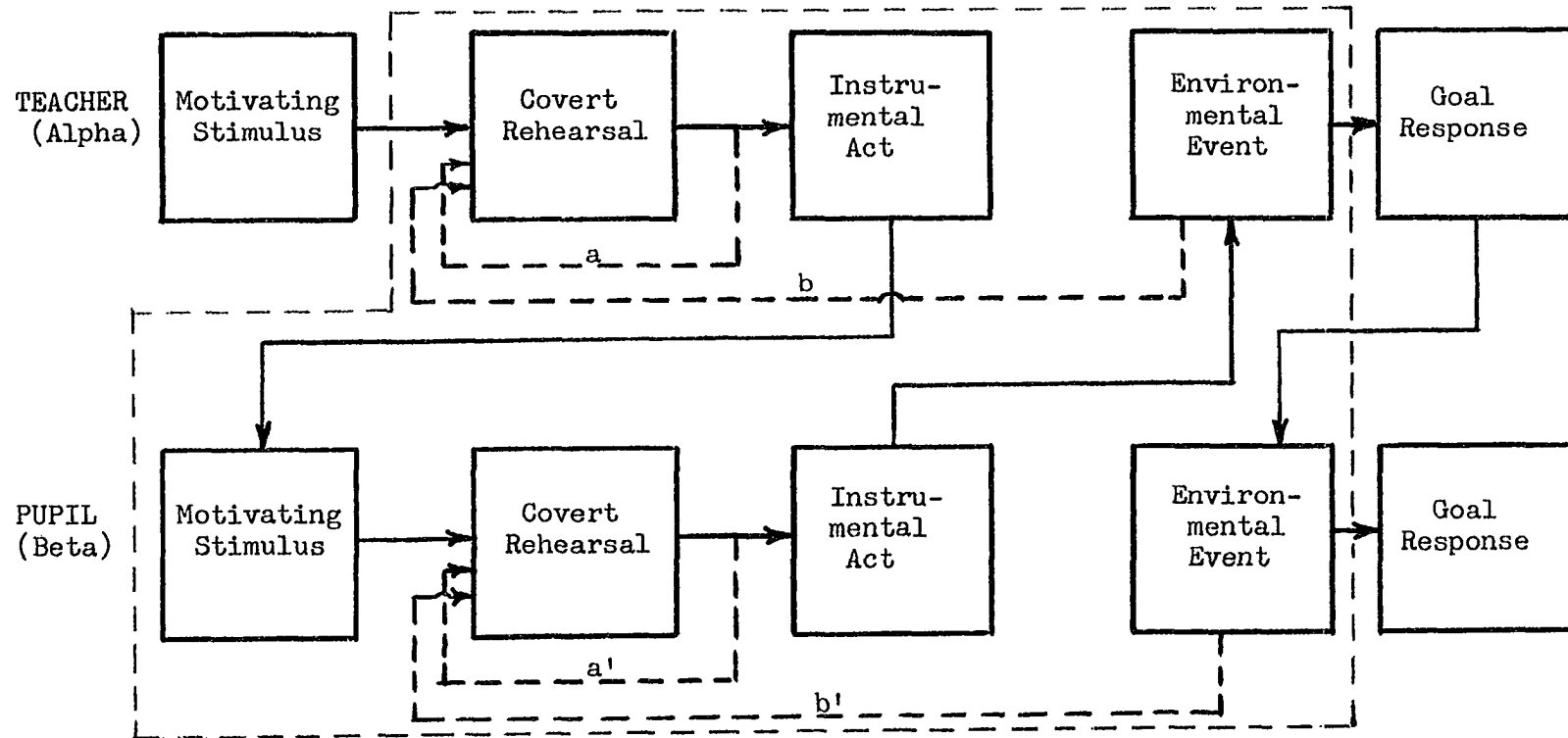
To teach: to humanize, actualize, reconcile, desire growth for the pupil and self.

Curriculum: design, planning, instruction.

Symbolic: present contrast.

Evaluation: "What is form of meaning now?", feedback, acceptance.

Symbolic: facilitate, interpret, encourage meaning expression.



Contact-conflict: attention to stimulus.

Understanding: assessment, re-formulation.

Response: symbolic expression.

Feedback: reorganizing, accepting.

Meaning expressed: humanized, change, growth, coping.

Figure 3. Mead's "social act" adapted to a theory of education as presented in this paper.

occurs and new planning begins toward another Motivating Stimulus for the pupil.

The area outlined in red in Figure 3 represents the heart of the communications net. It involves the understanding phase of the educational process. It is clear that the educator becomes important to the understanding phase of the educational process, a point to be developed later in this chapter. On complicated learning tasks the process of covert rehearsal, evaluation, instrumental act, and reorganization goes on continually and proceeds toward the time when the teacher and pupil are both satisfied that the pupil has understood and that the goals of both are possible.

5) When the Instrumental Act of the pupil becomes an Environmental Event for the teacher, that will allow movement toward the teacher's goal, a Goal Response is made by the teacher. The Goal Response of the teacher is a facilitating response for the pupil, one that asks the pupil to express the meaning that he finds in the educational experience.

6) The pupil receives the teacher's Goal Response as his own Environmental Event. If he can accept this symbolic act as facilitating and goal producing, that is if it satisfies his needs, then the pupil makes a Goal Response. The pupil's Goal Response is a life response, that is it should actualize the pupil and have meaning that can be expressed. If the pupil is not satisfied with the Environmental Event received, feedback to his own Covert Rehearsal stage occurs and further understanding becomes necessary.



7) The pupil's final Goal Response can become a new stimulus to the teacher and the whole process is repeated.

### Implications and Explanations of the Communications Model

The model proposed is not intended to become a god for the educator. It has its limitations and anyone can push it to the point where it no longer satisfies. For example, it says nothing about how feedback occurs, or what to do with messages addressed to "anonymous" persons. Nor does the model allow for self-learning or spiritual growth where the "Teacher" is removed. But one could easily substitute for the "Teacher" another participant such as "social order," or "life" and still have a possible model. For our purposes we will speak about the teacher-pupil relationship and turn now to its implications and some explanations.

The Sender. The encoder, or sender, must know several things:<sup>8</sup> what to say; how to say it; to whom and when; who has the potential to do it; the social structure and status of the receiver; what possible choices he has; his own social identity, his relationship to others, and how they see him.

What to say is always a problem. The educator must base this on his intent, his goal or purpose, the status of the receivers, and an accurate assessment of his own abilities. It is also related to what has already transpired in the teaching-learning transaction.

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 5-33.

How to say it becomes a product of the educator's ability in vocabulary selection, his assessment of the pupil's willingness to accept and to decode the message. Also involved is the pupil's commitment to his present social role, the social norms at work, the proper symbols to use, the best thought-forms and structures to present. What the teacher desires is that the personal meaning within the pupil be elicited and discovered as he identifies with the personal embedded in the general ideas offered by the curriculum.

If the reader will look at Figure 2, Page 55 the various items involved in the covert rehearsal stage are noted. The sender must consider the identities of himself and the other. This is very important for the words used and forms of address employed can prevent messages going astray. Role playing, another major activity, is sometimes done overtly. Role playing, as a teaching instrument, often leads to greater awareness on the part of the pupil and result in better communications.

Role taking is different than role playing. It involves an image of the receiver on the part of the sender. It calls for an assessment of the decoder's response potential. It requires placing one's self in the place of the intended receiver in order to see his point of view, his traits, and his status. One can see the possibilities for communication breakdown if either participant in the communications process is unable correctly to assess "self" or "other".

In the process of Role taking, the "other" becomes "generalized," and takes on a shape, an image, and the sender

constructs a message. All the while feedback enters into the message-generating process. Finally, the "other" becomes "specific". Here is the key to the educational process. In the role-taking rehearsal on the part of the sender, the "specific other" must be embedded in the "generalized other." This will provide the point of contact with the pupil through the conflict presented.

There is a need to return again to the illustration of the Eskimo film used in teaching a social study unit on "man" to explain the point to be made. When the planners of the curriculum wanted to offer a contrast to the children, they needed a means whereby they could present a conflict between the way of life the children already knew and another way of life. The conflict within the children created a contact for learning. But two more things are to be seen in this example. First, the film itself depended on the sender's (teacher's) selection of one based on a "general" understanding of the receiver (children); that is of their social roles, their self concepts, etc. This is the "generalized other." But secondly, the sender needed to use a film (or any media) that carried basic and deep issues regarding life. The film brought this message out in its account of the small boy killing the gull. There was the "specific" other at this point. It was "specific" because it was deeply personal. The film's message carried ultimate meaning; the kind of meaning every person can identify with because it is common. In this film, the message has the "specific," the personal, with which the children could identify, embedded in the general, which at first seemed bizarre and repellent.

It is the teacher's task, as sender of messages, to use whatever means possible, to encode messages that will elicit a meaning from the pupil that is personal and can be expressed.

The Decoder. Reading and decoding of messages are the kinds of tasks that Bruner describes as "perceiving accurately under substandard conditions."<sup>9</sup> What Bruner means is that the receiver of the communications message is required to go beyond the information given. He too must be involved in his own covert rehearsal process and is therefore required to "add to" or go beyond the message itself. But what does the message itself contain?

The message (the motivational stimulus) is the instrumental and symbolic act of the sender and contains:

1) an address to the receiver, an indication of his social position. Will he receive it?

2) indicators referring to the frame of reference within which the message is to be decoded by the receiver. In other words, indicators which allow the receiver to break the code, e.g. tone of voice, irony, satire, sarcasm, etc.

The sender often misaddresses the message either deliberately or unconsciously. When this happens the message goes astray and communication breakdown occurs and progress ceases. For example, pupils may refuse to cooperate with the educational task simply because they feel the teacher has a low opinion of them. "Therefore,

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 203. See also Jerome Bruner, "On Perceptual Readiness," Psychological Review, LSTIV (March 1957), 123-52.

the receiver, in his turn, is rehearsing the proposed interpersonal transaction before engaging in it overtly."<sup>10</sup>

The incoming message has no inherent meaning in it; that is, the message does not directly stimulate the receiver to perform the response intended by the sender. The meaning is not in the symbolic message, but is in the receiver already and emerges as a consequence of the operations performed on the message by the receiver and the understandings that come out of the communication experience. In other words, symbolic messages do not carry meaning in themselves but instead elicit meanings already present within the receiver(s). The educational and communicational hope is that the meanings elicited will humanize the receiver and, therefore, be within our goal and purpose for the curriculum.

Pathology of Communication. The model makes it quite clear how the communication breakdown occurs that leads to pathological behavior. It may not be clear to the sender, however, where or how his message failed. But some of the more obvious causes of breakdown would be found in the failure:

- 1) of the sender properly to assess the other: his self-concept, social role, status, etc.
- 2) to have adequate symbols, structures, and thought-forms to carry the message.
- 3) properly to assess the other's ability to decode the message.

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 206.

4) to convey an acceptance of the other--the message behind the message--e.g. "you are a person of worth."

5) of the receiver to assess the intent of the message.

6) of the receiver to accept his own self image and his social role, or to assess them correctly.

7) of the receiver to rehearse and create an instrumental act acceptable to the sender, and with sufficient evidence as to what is wrong.

8) of either side to desire or need to continue the communication process.

The model of communications above is one of the keys to understanding. It demands a consideration of the totality of any given educational situation. Students can't be considered as something separate from their total social context. This is seen from the ingredients that are considered important to the covert rehearsal stage (Figure 2, Page 55); which stage controls the flow of messages.

The teacher becomes a highly important person to the educational process. His knowledge of the total situation, as shown in the above model, determines how effective the communications will be. The teacher's ability is therefore determinative as to whether or not the meaning elicited in the pupil is humanizing. Therefore, it is time to see how the teacher influences understanding through his skill as a teacher.

## II. THE CHRISTIAN EDUCATOR AS FACILITATOR OF UNDERSTANDING

Important as the Christian educator is to all three phases of the process of education, he is probably most involved at the point of helping the pupil understand what is before him. A facilitator is one who makes things possible and perhaps easier. At its best, real learning is not easy. Kidd has pointed out that learning means change.<sup>11</sup> Change means the pain of giving up what has already been appropriated into the inner world of perceptions and beliefs. Change means giving up attitudes, ideas, skills, and perceptions. Generally speaking, because it is painful an educator is needed to facilitate change in the student.

The teacher's role envisioned here is like the one Frankl describes as the role of the therapist. It consists of:

. . . widening and broadening the visual field of the patient so that the whole spectrum of meaning and values becomes conscious and visible to him.<sup>12</sup>

As the facilitator, the teacher is largely instrumental in bridging the gap between the first contact and the final expression of meaning. He stands between the learner, as he becomes aware that there is a conflict situation before him, and the final personalization and symbolic expression of the meaning elicited from the learner.

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<sup>11</sup>J. R. Kidd, How Adults Learn, (New York: Association Press, 1959), p. 17.

<sup>12</sup>Viktor Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning, (New York: Washington Square Press, 1963), p. 174.

Through his skill in communication, the teacher facilitates the process of education as he keeps it moving along. He facilitates by challenging and waiting, questioning and listening, prodding and accepting, offering and receiving. He knows people and he knows learning. He comes to know who is ready to learn and who is not, and to accept both.

### Individual Relationship and Understanding

It has already been suggested that education for meanings is the education of persons that promotes growth and change through a process that has expression of meaning as its goal. Something has meaning when it brings the individual into an awareness of the truth of his human situation.

The educator, in the individual encounter of learning that is the one-to-one relationship, seeks to help the pupil come to, and express, the significant meanings that arise out of the educational experience. That is both his aim and the aim of the pupil for himself. Because the Christian educator knows sociologically, theologically, and educationally what is happening he can provide the climate in which that happening may be possible for the pupil. "Happening" is a word in common usage today, especially by young adults. It means an event created with the possibility that those who view and experience it will find a personal meaning unique to the particular event or "happening". The content of the "happening" does not carry the meaning. Rather the event itself elicits meanings from the receivers by the use of certain symbols, thought-forms, and language.



In order to promote meaning growth the educator will need to seek the development of meaning by communication--by a dialogue for understanding. Snyder has suggested two images of the educator that are helpful.<sup>13</sup> One is the "developing listener." He is the person who can sense at what stage of development the meaning now is and who can care enough to do whatever is helpful to bring it along into a clearer form. The second image is that of a "midwife." The teacher is a midwife helping to give birth to meanings by encouragement, patience, and skill.

Individual relationship between teacher and pupil may be the quickest way to pupil understanding and to eventual meaning expression. But another function of the teacher is to help the group or class. Much of our educational task depends on group life and work.

#### Group Life and Understanding

Brim has pointed out the use of the group method in parent education and notices that much is yet to be learned regarding its value and contribution toward parental changes of practice and attitude.<sup>14</sup> It may not be the group method that is the problem, but rather the aims of the process of education engaged in by the group. The small group movement is very widespread and is one of the most

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<sup>13</sup>Ross Snyder, "A Ministry of Meanings," from a mimeographed paper summarizing Snyder's book, written February 3, 1960 by Rene F. Pino.

<sup>14</sup>Orville G. Brim, Jr., Education for Child Rearing, (New York: Free Press, 1965), p. 202ff.

common forms of education. Whatever the value of this method, and its value is apparently related to the attention given to the status of the learners,<sup>15</sup> the group method is one way of finding meaning in education. Snyder points out that in Christian education we speak of the redemptive group. Only a "redemptive group" is really a group, according to Snyder.<sup>16</sup>

For the purpose of this section on group life the position taken on group life is that of Snyder. A redemptive group is one on which the members are offered the possibilities of meaning development and expression which is "the heart pulse of their consciousness."<sup>17</sup> Or a redemptive group offers life anew to persons who have been dead to any real sense of knowing a creative and free existence.

The group brings us off the balcony (the onlooker, the spectator, and the omniscient judge). Changes the world from something external in which nothing of us is suffused. Rescues us from historicism, the disinherited intelligentsia, the fake down-beat."<sup>18</sup>

In the process of education the group offers a climate wherein understanding can take place. Through the leader's skill as facilitator of communications, the curriculum design and the conflict and contact of ideas and perceptions, the students are led to a depth of understand about important issues and problems. Information, of value

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 205.

<sup>16</sup>Ross Snyder, "What Makes a Group Redemptive," from an unpublished paper, p. 1.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

to need-satisfaction, is carefully submitted. Suitable methods and techniques of instruction are used. Language, symbols, thought-forms, and structures in line with the intent of the curriculum and the status of the learners is employed. The teacher's own integrity, and sense of purpose along with his acceptance and care for the uniqueness of the pupil, is at work. Meaning is elicited out of the mixture of these variables as they are brought together for the health and growth of the students. It happens and it doesn't happen. No one knows when it will. Learning does take place in spite of the shortcomings, mistakes, and failures.

The group situation is immediate. The people are there and have to be dealt with now. There is no postponement, no education as a preparation for living. Christian education demands asking, "What is the meaning of this moment in history?"<sup>19</sup> It is education for living that the redemptive group is concerned with. It is a hunger for existence clarification--for understanding what it is to be human.

The Christian educator then employs both individual and group methods among his ways of contacting learners and in helping them really understand what is before them.

### The Educator as Instructor

Instruction is an effort to assist or shape growth.<sup>20</sup> It

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>20</sup>Bruner, Toward a Theory of Instruction, p. 1.

should be fairly evident by now that a Christian educator will need to be highly trained. The educator, in order to assist change through his role as instructor, will need to combine theories of instruction with a process of education.

The pupil is striving to understand. The educator strives to instruct so as to assist understanding. In Christian education the instructor will need competence in many of the following areas.

A theological awareness that he can use to interpret the meaning and experience of existence, and a willingness to train his students in theological awareness.

A competence in learning theory that has meaning for him and his experience.

A knowledge of social structures, the family, the community, the nation.

An understanding of communication theory.

An understanding of media and its use.

An ability to question so that personalization of knowledge can be assisted.

The ability to be a good listener.

A knowledge of human growth and development. How children, youth, and adults grow and change and the problems to be expected at various ages.

A feeling for his own identity and the willingness to support identity struggles in others and to accept feelings expressed by others.

A repertoire of methods and techniques that promote understanding and which he feels comfortable in using.

A sense for experimentation and a willingness to be flexible.

"A concern for problems which are positive, central, and related to the future, rather than concern for those that are negative, obscure, and past oriented."<sup>21</sup>

Of course other areas could be added. The point that must be clear is that a Christian educator is essential to the process of learning. There is no way a group of persons, more or less on their own, can gain the depth of understanding they need. To acquire the meaning of experience students need the guidance of a highly trained teacher.

One of the most effective instructional aids the teacher can use is charting. Charting is valuable because it promotes the much needed listening attitude. The teacher needs to train his pupils to listen, as he himself must listen. Many students, when presented with a new idea, tend to want to argue the point before they have really listened to what the idea is. Charting is a method of working with written documents which requires the student to listen before he critiques. It provides a way of getting hold of patterns and structures used by the writer. This allows the student to move beyond the content to what actually is in the author's mind. Here is an outline of charting procedure.

1. Concentrate on the whole of the document much as on a picture. This produces a gestalt for the student.

- a. Scan through the paper (or table of contents, if one). Look for the author's major breaks and subdivisions.

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<sup>21</sup>F. C. Emmerling, "A Study of the Relationship Between Personality of Classroom Teacher and Pupil Perception of Those Teachers." An unpublished Ed. D. Dissertation, Auburn University, 1961.

- b. Run fingers through the paragraphs. See what words, enumerations, etc., jump out to awareness.
  - c. Go through and number the paragraphs. Lay out a chart. (See Figure 4 for a sample five-paragraph study paper on "Universality of Faith.")
  - d. Read the conclusion and the paragraphs before and after the division.
  - e. Circle important words.
  - f. Find key paragraphs where the structure and/or thesis is laid out.
  - g. As yet the content is not important, but only the topical headings.
2. Relate the paragraphs and topics.
  3. Read and sum up the paragraphs. Do not start necessarily with the first paragraph, but with those that get the topics up and the structures out. Then complete all paragraphs.
  4. Further relate the paragraphs and the topics to refine your structure until a final gestalt comes.
  5. In your own words write a brief proposition stating what is in each paragraph, each section of your structure and finally for the whole paper.
  6. Retitle the paper and topics in words other than the author's.
  7. Relate the final topics and propositions to other writers and your own self-understanding.
  8. Analyze and criticize the author in relation to #7.

The procedure as outlined may seem laborious, but it actually saves time. With practice, paragraph summaries can be shortened and structures become more easily grasped. The reader will observe that the above procedure has within it the three phases of the educational process proposed in this paper.

Steps one through three are the contact stage. Here the

Topical	Summary of Paragraphs	Structure	Propositional	Personal	1. What is Faith? Fact of Faith	Universality of Faith			Conjunction of Faith and God
						Types of Reliance		Obscuring of Fact	
						Secular	Religious		
1. Faith is not intel- lectual belief, but is personal, prac- tical, trusting in, reliance on, e.g. Faith in Democracy, people. Existence is implied. Faith is an active thing direc- ted toward some- thing which has pow- er. Intellectual assent does not in- volve reliance in action.	2. Without such faith we cannot live. We cannot live without knowledge, but not by knowledge with- out faith. We al- ways rely on some- thing we do not know, e.g science, social life. Confidence has to go beyond knowledge.	3. Religious faith is that life is worth living, i.e. reliance on cen- ters of value to bestow worth to life. We do not live without a cause, an object of devotion, or something on which we rely for meaning. All men have faith.	4. We confuse the human process with institutional or- ganization, e.g. Education, poli- tics, religion. Religion as faith that life is worth living is common to all men. All men live for some purpose, cause of glorification of some god.	5. To have faith and God is one and the same. To believe life is worth living is to always think of it as made worth liv- ing by something on which we rely.					
Faith is a rela- tional term which points to my rely- ing on a not-me to have character and power expected of it.	When I ask the ques- tion as an individ- ual, "How can I know" or as a social be- ing, "How can I re- late," I see that confidence (faith) always goes beyond knowledge.	When I ask the question, "How can I live?" I see that I rely on something to make life worth living.	Faith points to a human activity not an institu- tion.	The term God points to two things: an objective reality and my reliance upon it.					
	In order to trust in life (live) I always have to rely on something I don't know, and when this reliance is on something to make life worth living it is religious faith.								
Religious faith is a relational term which points to that activity wherein I rely on some center of value, cause, or purpose to give my life meaning; it is not intellectual belief but has knowledge of its object; and when I depend for meaning upon this reality, it is my God.									

Figure 4. A sample of charting a paper.

Figure 4. A sample of charting a paper.

reader is bumping up against a writer's concept. It may look quite different and unappealing at this stage. Or it may seem like the greatest thing in the world. Steps four and five are the understanding stages. The student is trying to catch the full implications of what is being said. Steps six, seven, and eight are the personalization stages. Here the student reformulates the writer's ideas into his own meanings and evaluates them in terms of what he already has appropriated into his own perceptual field. Charting is an excellent way of getting at the heart of something, and quickly.

It has already been stated that finding the meaning in lived experience is something that can be learned. It is possible that individuals and groups can come to the point of needing the teacher less and less. This is as it should be. In the beginning, however, the teacher is crucial.

#### The Educator as Evaluator

Too often evaluation comes after the job has been completed. Evaluation should be included in the curriculum design. Evaluation should also be a continuous procedure for the instructor, in order to facilitate the entire educational experience. Evaluation is not intended to be a tool of the teacher alone. It is to be a means of providing excellence to the design, writing, methods, techniques and instruction of curriculum.

It is vitally important however for the educator. For example, if an educator believes that parents want information related to discipline of their children and then discovers by evaluation that



what they need is training in restoring communications between family members, then he can switch and meet the need. If evaluation is not incorporated into the curriculum, the educator may miss the real need (help with communications) and give help to the symptoms (acting out and discipline problems). Below are some guidelines for evaluation that contribute to understanding.

1) Evaluation should provide information about instructional problems to be anticipated. For example, if parent education is the curriculum, design should include health education as a part of the content when the students are poverty area parents or migrant workers. It is already known from previous information that such persons generally need health education.

2) Evaluation should be combined with teaching efforts in order to determine the student's response to those efforts. It should examine not only the response to content of the curriculum, but response to the teaching methods as well.

3) Evaluation should be of help to everyone concerned with the curriculum. Curriculum is a whole of many parts in balance: the scholar, the curriculum maker, the teacher, the evaluator, and the students. What affects one affects them all. Therefore, evaluation must be shared.

4) Evaluation often creates suspicion because it is viewed as a test. It can pose a threat to teachers as well as pupils. Therefore, its use must be very selective and purposive. At times it might be better to use its findings for the next project.

5) Evaluation should be considered with regard to the teacher who is teaching the curriculum and the students who are learning it. Reasons for this include the fact that teachers may make or break materials by their attitudes toward them. Or students may not be suited to the curriculum because of some misconception of their abilities. In any case evaluation requires both teacher and pupil participation.

6) Evaluation must make a contribution to the instructional enterprise. Otherwise, it merely reflects what the teacher and pupil can do. It must not become another god in the educator's mind. The pupils are not to be the guinea pigs for some evaluator. Evaluation is an important and necessary tool. It is to be used justly and wisely and given its proper amount of value, as difficult as that will be to do.

### III. CURRICULUM DESIGN FOR UNDERSTANDING

A chief role of the educator will be as designed of curriculum. This is a difficult task that requires much skill and theoretical, as well as practical, knowledge. But if the educator does not understand at least the basics of curriculum design, he is continually up against the possibility that what is being offered is irrelevant. A close look at some design needs will point this out.

1) Curriculum design needs an objective or goal. What is the purpose of this curriculum? What is the hope for its use? The objective of Christian education has been suggested as one which desires that students, "know who they are in relationship to God as

revealed in Jesus Christ, and know what their human situation means."

2) Curriculum design needs scope. What is appropriate to be dealt with in the curriculum is the scope of the curriculum. In Christian education the scope of the curriculum is "co-extensive with what God has revealed through his creative and redemptive action and the implications of this action for man in the whole field of relationships--God, man, nature, and history."<sup>22</sup> The concept of scope is based on the belief that Christian education has as its subject matter:

Life in its setting; the meaning and experience of existence.  
The Reality of God: the meaning and experience of God's continuing revelation.  
The new Life in Christ: the meaning and experience of continuing redemption.  
Vocation: the meaning and experience of discipleship.  
The Church: the meaning and experience of Christian community.<sup>23</sup>

3) Curriculum is designed for a context. Broadly stated the context for Christian education is the church--the Christian community. When the discussion was earlier speaking about the teacher and relationships for learning, it was focusing on the context. The context for education where meaning is the goal must be one in which the learner is nurtured. The learner is at the core of the communicating process. What is communicated is the power of the

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<sup>22</sup> Curriculum Committee General Board of Education of the Methodist Church, Design for Methodist Curriculum, (Nashville: Graded Press, 1965), p. 13.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

Christian community to accept, to care, and to teach by the action of the Holy Spirit.

The context will also include the social and psychological factors. The reality of the educational setting is important. The grouping, resources used, equipment and evaluation are also factors of context.

4) Curriculum is designed for certain learning tasks. Erik Erikson has contributed to our understanding of learning tasks. His description of the life-cycle as stages through which each person must pass, resolving certain psycho-social crises along the way, points up the varying development tasks at each age level, or crisis period.<sup>24</sup> These developmental tasks create certain problems to which the learning through curriculum speaks. Learning tasks are therefore related to life problems and concerns. There are five basic learning tasks for Christian education to consider, since they are the tasks at all times operative.

Exploring the gospel for its relevance to lifelong concerns.  
Exploring the whole field of relationships in light of the gospel.

Discovering meaning and value in the field of relationships in light of the gospel.

Appropriating personally the meaning and value discovered in the field of relationships in light of the gospel.

Assuming personal and social responsibility in light of the gospel.<sup>25</sup>

The first three of the above tasks apply to this section of

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<sup>24</sup> Erik Erikson, "Identity and the Life Cycle," Psychological Issues, I: 1 (1959), 50-100.

<sup>25</sup> Curriculum Committee, op. cit., p. 30.

the paper on understanding. It is a deep understanding of ourselves and our relationship to God, man, and nature that we seek. These tasks describe a process. They are not sequential. Christian learning tasks imply the intersection of the light of the gospel with fundamental questions of existence. The teacher's task is to promote and enhance the exploration and discovery that leads to self-understandings and appropriation of meanings for life. He will need to design, or know the design of, curriculum adequate to these tasks.

5) Curriculum design needs structure. Bruner points out the need for structure in curriculum. Structure is the pattern of events and their relationship. Structure is how things hang together. To understand the relation of things in a particular situation allows the student to move to another related situation. A related situation is one with a similar structure.<sup>26</sup>

Recall Bruner's earlier illustration of the film on the life of the Eskimo used with a class of children studying a social science course on "man". The events pictured were at first repellent to the children. The small boy killing the gull seemed inhuman. But as the children began to understand the patterns of the different culture and why these patterns were different, a new meaning for them began to come out of the experience. The children discovered that life in the frozen North requires a more primitive existence. Human needs are the same everywhere but they may be met in quite different ways.

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<sup>26</sup>Jerome Bruner, The Process of Education, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), p. 7.

They were met in ways different from any the children had previously known. With this new understanding the children could move on to similar understandings of the Australian Bushman or the Congolese African.

If curriculum is to create learning experiences that can help produce the possibilities of change, it must incorporate structures which have the possibility of being appropriated by the students.

6) Curriculum needs an educational process. The thrust of this paper is that there is an educational process that produces meanings. If this is true, it must be a part of the curriculum design. Contrast should be employed. The student should experience a contrast, as did the children studying the Eskimo as "man." There must be contrast presented in a general statement. But within that general statement there must be embedded the personal, which the student can become aware of through his working to understand the ideas, concepts, and symbols which contribute to the structure of the educational experience.

## CHAPTER V

### THE PERSONALIZATION OF EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Discussion in the previous chapter centered on the Covert Rehearsal stage as the heart of the communications process. There is an additional step toward reaching the goal of the educational-communicational process, and that is the expression of the meaning elicited, a phase which requires the personalization of the experience.

It is this phase that is so often neglected, leaving much of what is called education today (e.g., the class, the seminar, the workshop, the conference) sterile. There is nothing really personal about many of our educational experiences. Generally information is passed around, lectures are made, papers are read, discussion goes on by the hour. There is nothing wrong with these means of getting ideas out in the open. These processes may even lead to the understanding we hope for. But where is the individual participant pushed to say what it all means in regard to his vocation, his family, his life plan?

The process suggested becomes really helpful as a social act if in the end the participants express the change that the experience has made in their existence: changes in ideas, attitudes, concepts, behavior.

In the communication process the end result must be expressed meaning, for as was originally said, "something 'means' when it

humanizes or actualizes the individual." The goal for education is to help persons become aware of meaning in their human situation.

In the process of gaining understanding rapport is built between teacher and pupil. As the communication continues and the teacher facilitates the understandings of the pupil new depths of relationship result. The teacher is not just a creative listener, but is also willing to share. The communication, when it becomes real communication, moves toward less concern with covert rehearsal and greater willingness to respond openly to environmental events as they arise. There is less concern to respond in ways that "meet the desires" of the other and more concern to just be ourselves responding honestly and accepting the other as he is.

This openness to one another tends to pull the participants closer and closer to the basic and underlying issues of each educational experience. The educational experience becomes an intimate experience in which both teacher and pupil gain further understanding of themselves and their existence.

Throughout, the emphasis has been on meaning and education that can elicit meaning from the pupil. Any educational experience has the potential for meaning provided the student gains some sense of increased identity, "I am this," or "I can do this," "I am responsible," "I am guilty," "I feel like. . ."

The teacher-pupil relationship has this end as its goal: to aid in resolving the identity struggle of the pupil. In the communication process (Figure 3, page 57) the teacher skillfully aids the student's movement to the point where the student receives an



Environmental Event that allows his own unique Goal Response. The Goal Response has its basis in the meaning within the individual and symbolically expresses that meaning.

Those who receive that expression, in whatever form it appears, cannot receive the same meaning, because meaning is not in the symbols but in the person, but if the symbols are really symbols, they carry the potential to elicit similar meanings in others. "Clearly meaning is related to the codes we choose in communicating, the language we use in encoding our intentions into messages and in responding to a decoded message."<sup>1</sup>

Speaking of Mead's understanding of the "meaning" of meaning, Pfuete suggests that:

. . . symbols are gestures that indicate to another agent how he should respond. Meaning is not simply some nexus of ideas within a private consciousness: it is rather a gestural relation in which the adjustive response of one organism to another is the interpreted meaning of the gesture. And, as such, it determines the later phase of the social act. 'Life becomes conscious at those points at which the organism's own responses enter into the objective field to which it reacts'.<sup>2</sup>

Mead's idea implies two things. First, the response the receiver makes to an instrumental act is his expression of the meaning he has given to the message. For example, in the Eskimo film and the social study class, the children's response included: "He's got to grow up to be a hunter. His mother was smiling when

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<sup>1</sup>David K. Berlo, The Process of Communication, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960), p. 173.

<sup>2</sup>Paul E. Pfuete, Self, Society, Existence, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954), pp. 66ff.

he was doing that." There followed an extended discussion about how people have to do things in order to learn and they have to do certain things in order to feel appropriately.<sup>3</sup> These responses are in themselves the meanings that were elicited by the message, or symbols, of the film. Secondly, Mead suggests that responses which reflect meaning need to become part of the objective world. Responses need to be made public and not continually rehearsed. Goal responses are to be made public. They are the symbolic representations of the meanings elicited from stimulation received through communication. A continual flow of goal responses is the educational task. The curriculum and the teacher are both oriented toward a specific goal response. The instructional-communicational task is to provide the kind of experiences that can best create the climate where desired goal responses can happen.

In the case of Christian education the goal responses are movements by the pupil toward authenticity. Any feeling on the part of the student that he is valued for his existence, and can cope with his existence is authentic life.

Authenticity has always had the overtones of tested integrity--of being able to live out of 'the Truth I was meant to be' under pressure from an environment radically different and often hostile. Authenticity sometimes means walking a lonesome valley. . . maintaining one's distinctiveness and otherness. . . yet without losing one's warm humanness and ability to relate to people. To some degree I am convinced that this is the destiny of anyone who takes Christianity seriously, and that the educational program of

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<sup>3</sup>Bruner, op. cit., p. 161.

our churches must help our young people and adults know that this is so, and give them resources for such existence.<sup>4</sup>

## I. SYMBOLIC EXPRESSION

Berlo, Bruner, and others speak a good deal about language as the means of symbolic communication. In recent years communication experts have placed great emphasis on language study and the meaning of words.

Also in recent years a great deal of attention has been given to other means of symbolic expression, some of which have become very useful to communication and education. Media of many kinds can be used to express the meaning we give to stimuli. Art, in its various forms, is one of the most important and should be given some attention.

Art is that device which most vividly represents the condition of man. McLuhan calls the artist the one person who is most in touch with the nature of the present.<sup>5</sup> Not very many of us are artists, but nevertheless we can participate in the art of the professional as well as create our own art. Words can often be used to block or to hinder communications. Words are just not adequate to the feeling. Perls has said, "instead of being a means of communication, or

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<sup>4</sup>Ross Snyder, "The Authentic Life: Its Theory and Practice," Older Youth/Young Adult Project, (Nashville: The Methodist Church, 1963), p. 6.

<sup>5</sup>Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), p. 65.

expression, verbalizing protects one's isolation from both the environment and the organism."<sup>6</sup> Art gets beneath the vocal and attends to the subvocal situation.

Painting, poetry, sculpture, pictorial symbol, myth, dance, drama, and music are all ways of expressing one's understanding of existence. The artist, when he uses a medium such as one of these, is speaking about how life is. The pupil, when he begins to use an art medium to express his meanings, is also beginning to say something about how life is. At first these efforts may be feeble. But as the individual responds to increasing self-awareness, deeper and deeper life-problems are confronted and expressed. Perls has written:

. . . successive art-works are fundamentally different, there is a deepening of the art-problem; and indeed, this actually sometimes proceeds so far that the (artist) is finally forced to confront life-problems that he cannot solve by artistic means alone.<sup>7</sup>

Educators can help pupils to express their learnings through the use of various art forms. In one church, where families were engaged in a study of the "20th century Family," the teacher, having helped the families struggle through many hours of discussion on the vocation of discipleship and the shape of the modern family, suggested the use of an art form to cap the study. The teacher suggested each family create a "coat-of-arms" as a symbol of what their family stood for. One family produced the design seen in Figure 5.

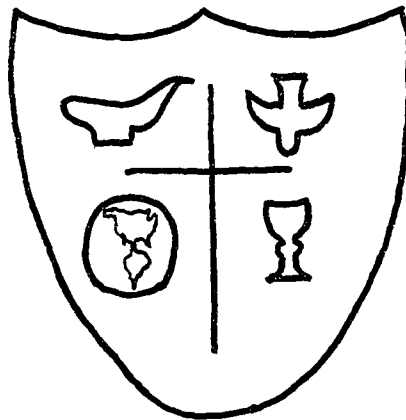
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<sup>6</sup>Frederick Perls, Ralph E. Hefferline, and Paul Goodman, Gestalt Therapy, (New York: Dell, 1965), p. 324.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 326.

The family could say afterward that the "lamp" stood for their belief in education, both secular and Christian; the "dove" represented their belief in the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives; the "world" symbolized their concern for all men everywhere; the "cup" indicated their need for a covenant relationship with God and man.

Figure 5. A "coat-of-arms: created by a family to symbolize their discipleship. A sample of art as symbolic expression of meaning.



This coat-of-arms is a grand illustration of the expression of meaning as it was elicited within this family group through their study and experience together. We can assume that much of their earlier life experiences are involved in this symbol. But the study caused them to focus their attention, to communicate their feelings, to understand anew what they were living for and to re-dedicate their lives again to that end.

The process of education has come full circle. Its ending

is its beginning in that the stimulus for new educational experiences is often in the one just completed.

The model proposed is to be an educational aid. It will not satisfy every educational situation, nor will it explain all communication. It can, however, serve as one way of thinking about communication and the relationship of communication to education.

And, the model points to the third stage of the process of education--the symbolic expression of meaning. If the pupil can find ways to express what the educational experience has added to his self-understanding and self-awareness, then there is greater possibility for growth toward knowledge, in depth, of what the human situation means.

## II. AN EXAMPLE OF AN EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE FOR MEANING<sup>8</sup>

Having developed a theory for process education and related this to the church's ministry of education, a final step is to give an example of how this might work. In doing this I wish to use an example already created for a high school literature class. What is proposed here is one illustration of learning by use of the "contact - understanding - personalization" process. The example selected is used for at least two reasons. First, it is not a so-called

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<sup>8</sup> John Rouse, "Lecture Me No Lesson," Media and Methods, III:6 (February 1967), 10-13. The illustration of Mr. Rouse has been adapted for use here with careful attention toward not altering its content or intent, but only to make the use of it more in keeping with the purpose of the chapter. Underlining is mine.

"religious" model in that it deals with the everyday studies of youth who often learn little from literature classes, but will be shown that education can be religious without being in the church. Secondly, because it makes the student's own experience the central concern.

It lacks the benefit of completion since it submits only a beginning, but when used as it is here, we see in this beginning the way to the end.

I think there are at least three important functions that only a classroom teacher can perform. One is to determine what activity a particular student or class needs at a given time. Another is to structure a context in which that activity becomes a meaningful experience for each student. The third is to provide the response of a trained, sympathetic reader and listener to the things a young person's experience has moved him to say. In short, I think the teacher's unique concern is with the student's experience, not with information per se. But human teachers ought to care about the human consequences of what they do. These consequences are the ideas, the feelings, the attitudes that result from the classroom experience. Why teach young people all about literary forms--to take just one example--if at the same time we teach them to hate literature?

Suppose, then, we develop an English program that offers experiences for young people--not passive experiences, like listening to lectures, but active experiences that call on the resources of their minds and spirits. . .

Let's take a book that is frequently taught in the schools and plan two lessons around it, . . . The book is John Knowles' A Separate Peace (Bantam, 75¢). As you know, it tells about--to put this in simplest terms--life in a private boys' school on the eve of the Second World War. Now, the first lesson will not be a lecture on Knowles' life, or on the novel as a form, or on the Second World War. Not if we want these students to be engaged by this book. Not if we want to stir their feelings and provoke them to writing that expresses something of their own individual thought and character.

So let's begin our planning with the novel itself and consider what aspects of life Knowles is interested in having us explore with him. If we had to sum up A Separate Peace in a few key words, I would choose these: patterns, discipline, growing up. Knowles seems to be investigating the conflict, often ethical, that develops between the patterns of social organization and the patterns each person makes of his experience. He is concerned

with how people come to terms with discipline enforced by the established order. And, of course, he has written a novel about the passage from youth to adulthood.

If you know the novel then you know how inadequate this description is. But our purpose at this time is only to identify important concerns in the novel, not to formulate an interpretation the student must learn. He will have to find his own meaning in the story through his experience with it--that is his problem. Ours is to structure a context in which a personal experience with the book is possible.

So let us say that this novel says something about patterns, discipline, growing up. As the students enter the lecture room they are met at the door by two teachers who give each one a sheet of paper with what seems to be a poem of some sort printed thereon. As they take their seats they see in front of the room a lecturn with the "lecturer" seated to one side; there is also a piano and a student sitting before it obviously waiting to play. There are also several other teachers present, perhaps five in all. When everyone is seated the doors are closed and a warning chord is struck on the piano. All the teachers, including the lecturer, promptly rise and begin singing from the paper held in their hands. It is the hymn, "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind." They do not instruct the students to rise, but seek by their example, by admonishing looks and slight gestures to indicate what is expected. At the end of the verse the lecturer may say, "Now, I think we can all do better than that, can't we? Let's try again." And try they do.

This hymn is a favorite in the chapels of many private schools, and it is sung in the Devon School of A Separate Peace. The first line of the hymn, "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind, forgive our foolish ways," has an added significance in the context of the novel.

Now the lecturer goes on to welcome the students to the "school" they will be attending for the next two or three weeks. He speaks of its traditions and of its goal to produce educated moral young people. He lists the important conduct rules that must be observed; for example, the boys must address a male teacher as "sir." He is assisted in this presentation by a student, the "president of the student council," who explains the dress code; the boys, for example, must wear ties and jackets. The headmaster--as we may now call him--goes on to give a brief orientation to the unit of work itself and concludes by giving an assignment to be accomplished for the next class (the small group session the next day): each student is to consider whether or not he wants to remain in this new school and then to write a paragraph setting forth his decision along with the reasons. As the session ends copies of the novel are distributed.

The idea here, of course, is to give the students an experience approximating that of an hour in a private school. And such a lesson makes every student in the group an active participant,



even though he may say nothing at the time. Confronted with the possibility of having to adjust to a new pattern of life, even if only for an hour each day, he cannot help being emotionally involved. His paragraph the next day should make interesting reading.

This is a step toward having young people examine consciously the patterns of life in which they actually find themselves. At the same time they will be spectators of how other individuals--Gene, Finny, and the other characters of A Separate Peace--work out the patterns of their lives. This study begins in the first small group session when the students read their paragraphs to each other as a way of sharing reactions to the previous day's experience. Also during this period they will make a final revision of their written work and then go on to reading the novel. Subsequent small group sessions will be essentially workshop periods where students will discuss their reactions to the novel and work on writing assignments that develop out of the large group meetings.

These first two lessons on A Separate Peace, then, illustrate how team teaching can be used to make the student's own experience a central concern of the English program. Perhaps some teachers may find the large group session described here too dramatic, too contrived. Certainly it may not be suitable for every group of students. Yet it illustrates one way in which the lecture hall can be used more profitably than for lecturing. And there are others. Large group sessions can also be used for these purposes: 1) to present a problem the students will explore in the small classes; 2) to provide an opportunity for students to report back to the large group the findings of their particular classes; 3) to provide a setting for panel discussions, dramatizations, and other presentations by the students; and 4) to show films. I am sure this list in no way exhausts the possibilities of the large group session, but lecturing on literature or composition is not one of them.

The above illustration is obviously suited to public education in its format of instruction--team teaching. Yet, many churches do use a form of team teaching with children and youth, and on occasion with adults. But the purpose and use of the example shown above is not in its direct application as stated, but in its beautiful example of education for personal meaning.

It is stated that the aim of the lessons were, "to stir their feelings and provoke them to writing that expresses something of their

own individual thought and character." This is personalization of experience as education and the aim of all good education. Notice the initial contact with the students. They were confronted immediately with a conflict--contrast situation. They faced and "participated" in a situation vastly different from any they had known; the contrast between the American High School and the private Devon School. Many of the students may have been repelled at first by the "new" school. "Confronted with the possibility of having to adjust to a new pattern of life, even if only for an hour each day, he cannot help being emotionally involved." Notice in the above statement the author's awareness of the conflict-contact possibility. Notice, too, the attempt on the part of the teachers to create a "life" setting in the classroom. This contributed to the contact possibilities as we indicated earlier in this paper.

Following up the initial contact with the students, the process began moving toward an understanding by the pupils of what was going on. They were asked to begin writing their reactions to the experience, "whether or not they wanted to remain in this new school. . . ." The understandings sought were to their own experience, to the general idea as it was presented, experienced, and shared together. They were to find their own meaning in the story through experience with it--that was their problem. And that was their road to understanding.

As the students began to read the novel itself we can imagine the high degree of involvement they would have to its theme, characters and situations. They would be able to personalize the entire

two or three weeks in terms of personal meaning. One can imagine going beyond the two sessions described here and developing the additional sessions that will ultimately lead to the eliciting of personal meaning. Some ideas which immediately come to mind would be the use of creative writing such as poetry or drama, the acting out of some of the passages in the "new school" setting, making a film about the school, creating a "coat-of-arms" symbol for the jackets of the boys at Devon School. Each of these, and many more could be thought of, would lead to personalization of the general idea that at first may have seemed bizarre and even repellent to the students.

We see the emphasis on the final stage of learning in this quote from Rouse's illustration, "This is the step toward having young people examine consciously the patterns of life in which they actually find themselves." As the examination continues the possibility for personal life meaning becomes enhanced. The question is raised, "What does this mean for my life plan?"

This paper has been continually arguing for education as meaning. It has maintained that the student's own experience is the only subject matter with which we should be concerned because that is life experience.

Surely we have experienced many "church" films and wondered why they fail to find a meaning response. They can be dull beyond explanation. The reason for the lack of involvement in most church-produced films is because they present information about experience and fail to create experiences for the viewer. They often do this

by giving the "right" answer so that no involvement by the student is required in supplying his own answer. What makes a film important for education is whether or not it involves us in experience and thereby teaches us something about ourselves.

In summary, every educational experience should test our capacity to move toward goal responses. It should "test the variety and scope and depth of our feelings and thoughts."<sup>9</sup> It should test our ability to respond to life and to cope with life through adequate communication and understanding of what we have experienced and how we have responded to the experience.

The educational task is not to teach about life, but to provide experiences with life. And this is done in order that the student may know about the answer to the question which arises out of our purpose for education, "Who am I and what am I going to do with my life?" The subject matter is the self. It is life in all its manifestations as the individual comes to know life to be.

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

#### I. SUMMARY

It has been suggested that education should embrace a process that has as its goal deep understanding of the educational experience and the expression of the personal meaning in terms of the student's self-defined life plan.

If the student is able to outwardly express the meanings of his educational experience it helps him to understand his human situation. This is because "meaning" has to do with how the individual understands his reaction to each experience.

It has been said that all education is religious in that when it has meaning as its goal it is involved with life in all of its manifestations. Education that is concerned with ultimate questions is religious education.

The process of education that has personal meaning as its goal is the one that begins with contrast. The individual needs something to "learn against." That is, the student needs to be up against something that he wants to know about or accomplish in order to learn. The contrast arises out of the conflict between how the learner perceives things to be and what is presented.

It was shown that a requirement of the first stage was that the introduction of ideas be done in language, thought-forms, and

structures that are general in their scope but that have embedded within the deeply personal. The student in discovering this "personal" and expressing it finds meaning.

The setting for education is important for contact. When meaning is the aim of education, the setting is best that is the real one. The real setting is the one where the problems arise and where they have become issues to be dealt with. In the real setting there is greater possibility that the need for learning will be intersected by relevant information and that meaning will result.

Symbols, it was pointed out, push beyond reality and elicit meaning. They are important to making contact because they elicit meaning in the receiver. But they must be understandable to the student. That is, traditional symbols may not any longer elicit the meanings we desire. Therefore, new symbols must continually be found which have the probability of contacting the student and giving rise to meanings similar to those raised by the traditional symbols.

The setting, the symbols used, as well as the design of the message, all contribute to establishing a contact with the learner through a contrast.

It was next pointed out that a sincere attempt to understand the total educational experience was the second phase of the learning process. Of course understanding the content is necessary, but students often begin to critique content before they fully comprehend the deep significance of the ideas and concepts to which they are introduced. Understanding calls for communication between teacher and pupil that is based on the idea of education as "social

act." That is, education takes place within a context that includes social and psychological factors. The teacher and pupil each have social roles and self-images which influence communication according to how these roles and images are assessed and accepted. Communication as "social act" implies fairly accurate assessment of the "self's" and "other's" roles and images in order that communication messages be acceptably designed and received.

It is in the effective communication between teacher and pupil that the educational process moves forward. It is in communication as "social act" that one gains understanding.

The understanding phase suggests a very competent educator. The educator's skills as communicator, instructor, curriculum designer, and evaluator seem to be crucial to all stages of educational process, but especially to understanding. The educator, through careful consideration of how and what to communicate, facilitates understanding and the movement toward personalization of the educational experience. The educator's skills facilitate understanding in that education as "social act" allows the structure of the content to become known to the pupil. Structure, it was mentioned, has to do with how ideas, concepts, and events hang together. Structure, once learned, is transferable to other similar learning experiences. Learning, by communication, requires messages that are designed so that the structure that is important to be understood--is understood.

The last step of the process of learning is the one most often neglected. It is concerned with the basic question, "What does this

educational experience mean in terms of my life plan?" It is shown that personalization of educational experience involves the expression of how one sees his reaction to the experience. Meaning is the self-understanding the pupil has to the experience. Therefore, meaning is deeply personal and arises from within the person and is not carried in the content.

In order to reach the goal of education, the pupil needs to outwardly express the meaning elicited by the experience. It has been suggested that this can take place in many forms. Language is the most common, but this too takes different forms as it appears in speech and in writing. Language can be formed into narrative, poetry, myth, novel, drama, and more. Each expression depends on the use of verbal symbols and some gestures. But personal expression of meaning can also embrace other forms such as painting, music, sculpture, play, dancing, and the like.

In terms of communication, personalization of experience is the goal response of the student. Having understood the content and its implications, the pupil is ready to make a goal response, or an expression of what the content means to him.

The cycle is complete. Often, the goal response becomes a stimulus to another encounter for learning and new understandings and meanings result. So the educational process continues--1) contact with the student, 2) understanding thoroughly what is presented, and 3) personalization of meaning.



## II. CONCLUSIONS

First among the conclusions to be mentioned is the need for personalization of experience in education. In general, education tends to neglect personalization. Both teachers and pupils generally avoid conscious attempts to express the meaning of experience. But the work of Bruner and others indicates the value of personalization. There is a need for the pupil to find the personal within the general, and when that happens it may be different for each pupil.

Teachers must push students to say, in some form, what the experience means to them. As one professor put it, "I don't care now what Tillich says, what do you say?"

The next important point that has come out of this study is the "meaning" of meaning. Meaning, as initially defined, included the self-understandings, the ideas, the concepts which humanize and actualize the student; or which do the opposite. (It goes without saying that in this process of education we desire positive meanings.) But "Meaning" is more than this. It is the self-understanding of how one reacts to a given situation. Therefore, how the student perceives his own reaction to the teacher, the ideas, concepts, thought-forms, symbols, etc., is the meaning.

Another important conclusion is that structure is important to understanding. Perhaps it is more important than it has been made in this paper and therefore should be more fully developed in terms

of meaning. Curriculum design needs structure for at least three important reasons, 1) understanding fundamentals makes a subject more comprehensible, 2) detail placed in a structural pattern is more easily recalled, and 3) understanding structure leads to transfer of ideas and training.

Again, the process of learning proposed here is for all ages of students. The teacher, in assessing the situation in which learning is to occur, can provide the climate in which meaning can be found. Naturally, the curriculum must consider the age and range of abilities of the students. But when it comes to personalization and meaning, all students are included. In an earlier chapter an illustration was used of a small girl trying to walk a board. The contact was the sight of the board itself and the challenge of walking it. The understanding was in the child's finding out how the board would respond to her being on it; how she felt up that high; etc. The personalization came when she expressed her feelings about what happened. Little children will often express their meaning in body action, facial expression, painting, and drawing. It has been shown that personalization of experience takes on many forms. Meaning remains within the student, sometimes being expressed over and over in different ways as the student grows up.

Finally, some persons are so sophisticated and knowledgeable that when presented with a contrast situation that contacts them, they move quickly through the process of learning on their own without help. This is of course one goal of education that has been suggested,

namely the elimination of the teacher in the formal sense. We hope for the student to acquire the skill to be able to engage experience, understand it, and say its meaning for him.

Among the areas that have occurred to the writer as productive if further studied in relationship to a process of education for meaning are, 1) readiness for learning, 2) intuitive thinking and its relationship to the process, 3) motives for learning, and 4) "discovery" of knowledge in relationship to knowledge gained largely through instruction.

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